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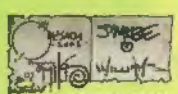
1st LOOK: SILVESTRI'S X-MEN
100 GREATEST X-MEN STORIES



SPIDER-MAN and BATMAN

COVER I of 2
SEPTEMBER 2003
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THE COMICS MAGAZINE • #0

three,two,one,ZERO

Two things you should know about the "all-new, all-different *Wizard* #0." One, work began on this issue nine months ago. Two, it made us hate pizza. While I'll get to the pizza thing in a minute, first let me explain why it took nine months to piece this thing together. Simply put, it had to be the best issue of *Wizard*. Ever. So we all gathered around the big impressive desk in the Wizard conference room, scratched our chins knowingly and made the decision: redo *Wizard*. The look, the content, the feel... *Wizard* was going under the knife and getting its first redesign in over five years.

While some elements that make this issue such an event are easy to spot (exclusive comic stories, X-Men hardcover offers, that picture of Gareb on page 8), everything between pages 1 and 208—everything—has our sweat on it. And I mean that in a not-gross way. We deconstructed the Price Guide, then put it back together 33 percent bigger and filled with invaluable sidebars and graphics to make you the ultimate collector. A new "Mega Section" was born, bursting with every movie, toy and comic side dish extra that makes being a fan of this medium so tough on the wallet. More columns, new departments, a complete head-to-toe *Wizard* redesign...to quote the philosopher Descartes: "Bitchin'!" Or maybe that was Keanu Reaves.

The next step was to come up with the most jaw-dropping editorial to fill this newly landscaped comic utopia. We set one goal: go after the impossible.

And we got it.

An all-new Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee Batman tale that fits seamlessly into the No.1-selling "Hush" storyline.

A Brian Michael Bendis/Joe Quesada tale that debuts the Ultimate Sinister Six (a story so cool that Quesada called during *Wizard* #0's production looking to expand the story, promising a two-page finale that would knock us on our ass...and it did!).

But don't order yet, there's more! The first-ever Marvel/Wizard hardcover offer, featuring the top 10 best X-Men stories of all time in a mammoth 250-page shelf-breaker!

Normally, that's where'd we stop and mail the rest of the issue in so we could go scope hotties beside the company pool*, but this was *Wizard* #0. We flipped through our highly guarded Rolodex and pulled big-name creators and made them a part of the book. Kevin Smith, Alan Moore, Alex Ross, George Pérez, Bryan Hitch...want more? How about a "Basic Training" art lesson by Michael Turner? The "First Look" at Marc Silvestri's return to the X-Men? A flipbook of Frank Miller doing yard work? Except for that last one (which we're still working on for a #1/2 offer), they're all in here.

Chock-full, yes, but like a fat guy at Thanksgiving, we found more room. We had to. Sony invited us to the first set visit for "Spider-Man 2"' and threw in some exclusive, sneak-peek images at next year's "Hellboy" flick. Then Artisan set us up with an exclusive interview with "Punisher" star Thomas Jane. All this—and about a hundred more pages of cool—came together into what you hold in your hands now: the most diversified, compelling collection of comic and pop culture stuff ever published. At least until next issue.

And that "we hate pizza" thing? Everyone listed on the *Wizard* masthead (that's the list of people on page 8 that no one ever reads) busted their collective asses to make this issue what it is. Long days, longer nights and more order-in pizza dinners than a dozen college campuses combined. So if you dig this issue and wanna say "thanks," find us a Chinese food place that delivers.

Enjoy,

Pat McCallum
VP/Editor-in-Chief
Wizard Entertainment

*There is no Wizard pool. Gareb had it paved over so he'd have a place to park his other Ferrari.

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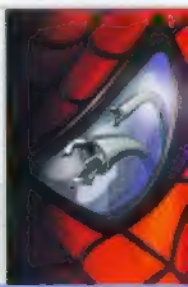
Spider-Man/Batman (left) by Joe Quesada, Jim Lee, Danny Miki and Scott Williams heralds two exclusive comic previews: **Ultimate Six on p. 40 and Batman on p. 48.** The Spider-Man close-up (right) by Greg Horn previews our **"Spider-Man 2" set visit on p. 56.**



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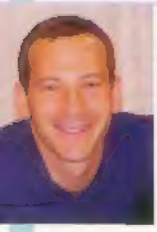
X-MEN HARDCOVER

WIZARD COLLECTS THE 10 BEST X-MEN ISSUES IN ONE VOLUME!

HISTORY IN YOUR HANDS



The moment has finally arrived; you now hold in your hands *the* most historic issue of *Wizard* since our initial launch in 1991.

Over the past nine months, we've been toiling behind the scenes to completely redesign and revamp our magazine. After thousands of man-hours and plenty of blood, sweat and tears, we've created a whole new *Wizard*—we've got more features, an expanded, mammoth 40-page price guide, new columns and departments and a whole new look for the mag.

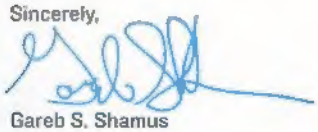
And with this historic milestone issue, we're gonna party like it's our birthday. We didn't want just some run-of-the-mill redesign, so we transformed it into a mega-event! To make this dream a reality, we enlisted some of the greatest talents to ever work in comics to contribute to our cause.

We've got two exclusive, original comic stories created just for this ish: a Batman story by Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee that takes place between *Batman* #616 and #617, *and* an Ultimate Spider-Man tale by Brian Michael Bendis and Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada that introduces The Ultimate Sinister Six!

But that's not all! For our profile of the legendary Neal Adams, we commissioned the master himself to create an original art opening...one that will blow you away! We've also got an exclusive behind-the-scenes look from the set of "Spider-Man 2," a "Basic Training" art lesson from Michael Turner, a diary of George Pérez's day-to-day events while crafting *JLA/Avengers*, a rundown of the 100 Greatest X-Men Issues Ever *and* an exclusive 250-page X-Men hardcover offer you won't find *anywhere* else on Earth!

And that's just the tip of the iceberg! What are you waiting for? Dive right in to the brand new *Wizard*, and help us celebrate this momentous occasion!

Sincerely,



Gareb S. Shamus

BYTHENUMBERS...

143 Number of issues between *Wizard* #1 and *Wizard* #0

17 Sports cars Wizard Chairman Gareb Shamus bought during that period

1 Staffer who asked "So when are we working on *Wizard* #0?" during the production cycle for *Wizard* #0

87 Meetings that took place over the last six months for the redesigned *Wizard* #0

5.0 Average blood alcohol content level for the entire staff during the production of *Wizard* #0

18 Characters on original Neal Adams opener (p. 74)

7* Characters you may not recognize

526 X-Men issues we scoured through for our Top 100 X-Men issues feature (p. 108)

42,000 Value (in dollars) of those 526 issues

43 Times an intern volunteered to take the books home for the weekend to "help out" with research

6 Times departing Staff Writer Casey Seijas pleaded to have Captain Carrot included in the Essential DC feature (p. 84)

3** Days later Casey quit in a huff when it wasn't included

*Go to wizarduniverse.com for the full roster!

** Only kidding about the huff part. Good luck in the future, Case!

CARROT TOP Seijas is pumped to bring the pain.

masthead

THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

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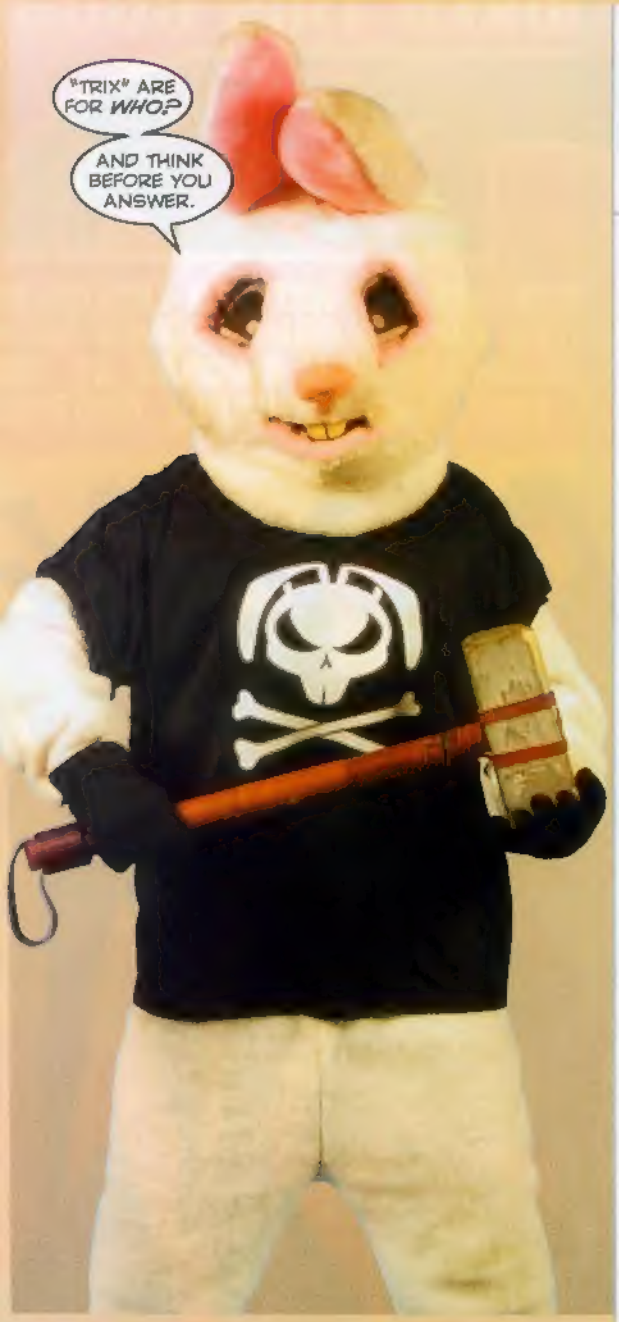

ENVELOPE ART

AVERY MOORE, Greenwood, SC

Alex Ross on penciling comics... Kevin Smith on 'Azrael'... & Nic Cage's next comic movie!

The biggest buzz of this month's batch of "Magic Words" letters? Comic book movies. From how awesome "X2" was, to how good/bad the "Hulk" movie looks, to drooling with anticipation leading up to "Spider-Man 2." The biggest surprise of this movie fervor? Fans have literally begged—we repeat BEGGED—for the G.I. Joe movie ad we ran on p. 119 in *Wizard* #140 to be 100 percent, bonafide reality.

Suckas.

You'd think people woulda figured out by now that in our annual April Fool's issue, nothing is what it seems, and everything that looks too good to be true...probably is. Case in point: Alex Ross still gets inundated with questions on when that Wonder Twins project he's doing with Paul Dini is coming out, which readers learned about *waaay* back in *Wizard* #104 three years ago.

Such is the case with our lovely G.I. Joe ad, painted up nice 'n' purdy by the ever-talented Dave Dorman. We picked our dream cast, ensuring every actor had to be plausible to create the illusion of reality. And it worked like a charm.

Funny thing is, not a soul asked us about our other phony ad or if Dr. Doom really *is* hawking iMacs...

Dear *Wizard* Nizzahs,

As the summer of 2003 movies heads into full throttle, I can't help but think about the summer of 2002. During that summer, I had been working in a comic book store for over a year, and read comics for over half my life. Thus I confirmed the now obvious fact: Comic book fans are too hypercritical.

Instead of enjoying movies like "Blade II," "Spider-Man" and "Star Wars: Episode II," I found myself for weeks after listening to various fans walk into the store and complain about every little tidbit in the movie. This is nothing new, as I've seen this happen for years now. But lately, now that more and more of these movies are being made, this sort of pointless arguing and over-analysis seems to get in the way of the enjoyment. Too many times, comic fans seem to rate how good a movie is by how few bad parts are in it.

If you like a comic movie, great. If you don't, no one's saying you have to. But let's not sweat the small stuff; I paid my eight bucks to get in, and I'm gonna try and enjoy my two favorite activities—movies and comics.

KEITH GATCHEL
Orlando, FL

Keith, it's a double-edged sword you wield. On one hand, what passionate comic fans forget sometimes is that these comic movies aren't just made for them, but for the general public. And kids experiencing the *snikt* of Wolverine's claws for the first time could actually attract them to comics.

On the other hand, sometimes the gripes and moans of fanboys can actually *help* a comic movie. Many moviemakers actually take these considerations to the drawing board when they're coming up with new ideas for sequels. "X2" Executive Producer Tom DeSanto and Producer Lauren Shuler Donner have both said action dominated the sequel because of some fanboys' criticism

QUICKHITS

"I found the Jim Shooter article [in *Wizard* #142] absolutely fascinating. Why isn't this guy doing more comc book work?"

DAVID ANDERSON, SPOKANE, WA

Lately there has been a lack of feature articles on artists. Don't get me wrong, writers deserve the spotlight as much as the artists, but there are plenty of artists out there at the moment that are worthy of a feature article."

ODOMS29741@SHTC.NET

[EDITOR'S NOTE: See p. 96 for a feature on THE best artists in comics today.]

"X2" is an absolutely incredible movie. Kudos to the cast and crew, and here's hoping that all will be back for "X3"!

TONI BOUGHTON, THEWEREWOLF@EUDORAMAIL.COM

I have been dreaming of a "G.I. Joe" movie since I was a kid, so when I saw in *Wizard* #140 an ad for a "G.I. Joe" movie, I nearly pissed my pants from excitement. Damn you for getting my hopes up! That Website's not real!

KRIZ@BMTS.COM

The Loeb/Lee *Batman* run is like a 180-mile an hour bullet train...and I'm happy to be along for the wild ride.

NICK K., LAS VEGAS, NV

Anybody else notice that the new Busta Rhymes/Mariah Carey video not only has a hot chick reading *Sin City*, but it actually has an animated segment in *Sin City* style? How cool is that!

R.J. STEIN, JR., LONG ISLAND, NY

If Marvel's *Truth* makes at least one kid read about the Tuskegee Experiments or any other horrors of WWII, then Marvel has created the first important comic of the 21st Century.

COLIN ARMOND, COLINARMOND@HOTMAIL.COM

I applaud how you highlight superb comics that don't have "hot" writers and artists. The "Great Unknown" feature in *Wizard* #139 convinced me to buy back issues of *Strikeforce: Morituri* and it kicked ass!

FREDRICK D. WEAVER

Now that there's a 24-hour video game channel, when will we the 24-hour comic book channel hosted by *Wizard* launch?

JAMES TILCON, CHARLESTON, WV

What do you think of THIS issue? Let us know. Send an email to: magicwords@wizarduniverse.com and be heard...er, read.

of the first flick's slow build-up.

So until the Sentinels overrun North America, use that free speech wisely.

Dear Magic Words,

I heard somewhere that they're coming out with a "Ghost Rider" movie. Is that true? How close are they to starting/finishing it? I think it would be so cool. I just want to see Ghost Rider kicking some ass with real actors. How cool would that be?

ANTHONY SIMONETTI

How cool indeed, Anthony. "In a perfect world, we'd love to be shooting this film early next year," says Marvel Studios Senior Vice President Kevin Feige. "Writer/director Mark Steven Johnson is halfway through his rewrite of the script and is coming up with spectacular stuff. Nicolas Cage is dying to do 'Ghost Rider.' He's doing a movie called 'National Treasure' as his next project but after that he wants to do 'Ghost Rider.' We're committed to him and he's committed to the movie. Now it's just a matter of timing." But then again, what comic book movie has Cage not signed on for, right?

Hey guys,

I was thumbing through some past issues of *Wizard* and I had a question about Alex Ross. Seeing those sketches for his projects, and being a big Ross fan, I'd like to see more of his work on a regular basis. Of course, making him a regular artist on a book would be impossible because it takes so long to paint it. But what if he just penciled a book and let someone else ink and color it? That way, we could get a monthly fix of Alex Ross art and even something crappy like *Quasar* would sell, right?

ERIK CRUZ

First off, Quasar kicks ass, my friend. He's got powerful Quantum Band bracelets, dude! And in our book, any character that can join the Avengers while wearing bracelets and a headband is badass! But we digress. "I've thought about penciling something, but I'd also ink it myself," says Ross. "I'd probably want my first real pencil-and-ink job to have a more traditional coloring than you see in a lot of today's comics. I just want to see how much my stuff can stand up in that reduced format. I was actually planning to pitch DC on something I'd write and draw, but not paint. But first I've got another project, where an artist [with a similar style to mine] would pencil it and I'd paint over it."

DIDJA KNOW?

"Magic Words" receives approximately 1,000 fan letters per month.

Magic Words crew,

Why the hell doesn't DC do something with Sgt. Rock? I believe they're sitting on a gold mine. If they would just get their head out of their fourth point of contact, they could come up with several more Sgt. Rock stories. It isn't rocket science!

SEAN K. STEWART
Cpt. SC, USAR

No, telling a good Sgt. Rock yarn isn't rocket science—it's closer to genetic engineering. And although neither famed *Rock* artist Joe Kubert nor *100 Bullets* writer Brian Azzrello have a degree in either, the two are teaming up for November's original graphic novel, *Sgt. Rock: Between Hell and a Hard*

WEIRDOMAIL

Dear Magic Words,

I have to say I that I am a little more than disappointed concerning your negligence of DC's Azrael. The character has been around for over 10 years and his self-titled series recently ended with issue #100. Over the years, I have seen very little of Azrael in the pages of *Wizard*. Azrael has accomplished things even Batman couldn't, but the poor guy always seemed to get kicked to the curb no matter what he did to prove himself worthy.

Anyway, it seems like Kevin Smith is the guy with the golden touch when it comes to less-than-popular characters. That being the case, I would like to issue a challenge to Mr. Smith. I challenge him to do something that even Azrael's creator—Dennis O'Neil—couldn't do: make the character great again, or at least try. Azrael is a character with great potential and I believe that Kevin Smith could bring it out.

MIKE LAFORTE
Laurel Springs, NJ

Y'know, you just might be on to something here, Mr. LaForte. Or not. "Now there's someone that thinks far too highly of me!" says Smith. "Well, Denny [O'Neil] ended up doing 100 issues [of *Azrael*], so if he didn't get great in those issues, I don't know if I can do it. Azrael has a very convoluted history and it'd be tough to do something different with him. The hardcore Christian background of the character would be kind of interesting to play with, but beyond that, I don't know."

Place. **"When I originally heard Joe Kubert wanted to do a Sgt. Rock project, I didn't even realize that he wanted to draw my Sgt. Rock graphic novel. I definitely felt pressure to not let Joe down with it because he's literally my favorite artist. Somewhere there are old *Sgt. Rock* comics that read like Braille because I'd trace the covers for hours."**

What up, yo?

I recently purchased the entire "Jem and the Holograms" cartoon series online and noticed the writing credit for one of the episodes was given to someone named Paul Dini. This wouldn't be the Paul Dini of "Batman: The Animated Series" and *Jingle Belle*, would it? If so, what other cartoons did he work on before getting his big break on "Tiny Toon Adventures"?

DANIELLE C. RADFORD

Maybe Dini's the reason we always had a thing for that "Jem" minx, Pizzazz. "Yes, I did write an episode of 'Jem,'" admits Dini, writer of August's *Witchblade Animated* one-shot from Top Cow, as well as some episodes of "He-Man," "Transformers" and "Ewoks." "I was very young and I had to have an operation to save myself from blindness. It was either write 'Jem' or sell my body on the street. Since there weren't any takers for the sex, I was forced to write an episode of 'Jem and the Holograms.'"

Dear Magic Words,

Hey. I've got a few questions if that's not a problem:

1. Are you guys planning on releasing another *Ultimate Marvel Spectacular* issue like last year?

2. Is *Marvel Boy* the actual first Ultimate Marvel title or was that a hoax?

3. Are comics like *Origin* and *Truth* considered Ultimate Marvel canon?

STEVE G.
Smartazz8870@yahoo.com

Never a problem for our man Steve G.!

1. As of right now there are no plans for another *Ultimate Marvel Spectacular*, but we never say never around here.

2. We went straight to Marvel's Information Czar Michael Doran to get the goods: "First Ultimate Marvel title? *Marvel Boy*?? Hmmm, guess ya gotta read *Marvel Boy* 2 to see if that could be true..."

3. "They're mostly just really good stories," says Doran. "But for those keeping track, both *Origin* and *Truth* are Marvel Universe stories. In fact, fans of *Truth* should read the new series *The Crew* to learn HOW much a part of the Marvel Universe it really is."

Dear You Guys,

Hey, what's up? I just have a quick question that NOBODY seems to be able to answer for me, so I turn to you: Where the crap is Joe Madureira and what is that guy up to? I saw that he drew a few covers to video game magazines, but nothing else really. Tell me he didn't give *Battle Chasers* up for that!

GEOFFREY BLACKMER
Portland, OR

Well Geoffrey, you are in luck! If you wanna know what Joe Mad's been up to lately, flip to page 138 for the full scoop!

Hello Magic Words,

I want to address a particular trend that has permeated the comics medium for years: Comics are not film.

While I enjoy a good comic book-based movie as much as the next fanboy, I get this vibe that the goal of mainstream creators is to either make comics more like film on paper, or to make comics more viable for Hollywood.

I'm sorry, but not all comics make good movies, and comics themselves certainly don't function like a film.

It is disappointing to hear creators speak of how they try to make their comics more film-like. While it is very beneficial to have influences outside of the medium one works in, each medium is unique unto itself and can accomplish things that others cannot. Film and comics have commonalities, but each medium's use of symbolism, time, motion and use of composition and camera angles (among others) are different due to the intrinsic natures of each medium.

When an artist uses a wide panel, it shouldn't be done because it makes the panel like a widescreen picture. It should be done because it offers a certain visual effect, or because it helps to slow down the read of the page. If an artist is going to use a cinematic effect, it should be done because it will create

JAILMAIL

Hey guys,

I've paid attention to your magazine off and on over the years. It was only incarceration that has forced me to subscribe. I didn't *need* to until now. But not being able to hit the shops on pay day, your magazine is all I have to keep up on what's going on.

So, after 31 years of collecting, I have a few gripes:

Gripe #1: Just how many first issues does a person need? There's no continuity in comics anymore. New character...new #1 issue. New direction...new #1. New creative team...new #1. As they say on TV, "Give me a break."

Gripe #2: I think it's high time that Marvel had a "Crisis" of its own, don't you? And I don't mean financially...

Gripe #3: I buy *Wizard* for comic book news, not comic book movie news. I want to see less movie hype and more comic book hype in *Wizard*.

Gripe #4: While you're at it, get rid of "Coming Attractions."

Gripe #5: If I want to know the latest comic related toy news, I'll buy *ToyFare*. The "Stuff" section in *Wizard* is redundant.

Gripe #6: Ditto for the video game section. Isn't that what *InQuest* is for?

Gripe #7: Mega-Dittos for the "Manga Mania" section. Don't you have *Anime Insider*? Redundant!

Gripe #8: A HeroClix price guide? Put it in *ToyFare* or *InQuest*, not in a comic magazine.

Gripe #9: If I want a comic book price guide, I'll get an annual addition. I don't need monthly updates!

Also, you've got an "issue #0" coming up (see Gripe #1, please). It better be worth it or you'll be hearing from me again.

TERRY DAVIS
#381694
Unit: 3B-252
Warren Correctional Institute
Lebanon, Ohio 45036

Thanks to Terry, "Coming Attractions," "Manga Mania" and the Price Guide have all been cut from *Wizard* #0 to be replaced with a new 60-page "Basic Training" by *Wolverine* writer Greg Rucka on how to break out of prison using only a copy of *Uncanny X-Men* #200, a Batman HeroClix figure and a picture of Dragon Ball Z's Goku.

P.S. *ToyFare* and *InQuest* aren't just for gaming and toy news. When rolled up they can also be used to hide a shank from the hacks, Terry.

an element that other techniques cannot do as well.

Do you see the fine line here? Films are a great influence, but creators need to make sure that they are adapting the influence of film for comics, and not adapting comics to be more like film.

PHILLIP GINN
Sacramento, CA

Is it a valid point or splitting hairs? We went to the "widescreen" master himself for answers. "Comics and movies are not the same, true, but they are very closely related," says *Ultimates* penciler Bryan Hitch. "Think of them as kissing cousins: Both are a visual storytelling medium and therefore much of the language is similar and cross-pollination exists between the two. *Watchmen* is a movie on paper employing a storytelling technique similar to movie storyboards and 'Matrix' is a comic book on film even down to the storyboards being done as a comic book. I feel a closer relationship with music, though, when it comes to telling a story as one needs to use pages, panel shapes and composition to dictate the speed a story is read offering rhythm, tempo and volume to the narrative. Inspirations and techniques are freely interchangeable and absolutely nothing exists in a vacuum."

Dear Magic Words,

What happened to Kia Asamiya on *Uncanny X-Men*? I really enjoyed his style and great draftsmanship. Marvel was plugging him as the new X-penciler for so long and now he seems to have fallen out of the spotlight. Is he penciling more *Uncanny X-Men*?

STEPHEN MOLES
steveman@ku.edu

The Japanese phenom is done with *Uncanny*—but that doesn't mean he's done with the world's most popular mutants. "After finishing his arc on *Uncanny X-Men*, Kia has taken some time to refocus on some series he let lag in Japan while he worked on the X-Men," explains Marvel Editor C. B. Cebulski. "He's currently working on *Steam Detectives* and *Silent Moebius*, but he will be popping up again on an X-related arc of an ongoing series in the near future."

Dear *Wizard*,

I was flipping through the August 2000's *Wizard* #107 and saw a "Casting Call" where you guys cast the X-Men sequel. Well, you guys are incredible psychics, or it was a lucky guess, because you have Alan Cumming as Nightcrawler! Just thought it was kind of funny.

JIM GEILER
Jacknife416@yahoo.com

We're incredibly lucky psychics. On that note, Jim—don't take that trip to Rome next year. Those horse laxatives will mess you up.

"Magic Words" is the result of Wizard *interns gone wild. We accept no responsibility for their actions.*

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CANDID CAMERA

Busiek returns—minus Ross—for 'Marvels' sequel

JAM MASTER JAY Jay Anacleto takes over art duties on the sequel to *Marvels*.

Break out your history textbooks because writer Kurt Busiek's ready to begin class again.

Over 10 years after the writer, along with painter Alex Ross, unleashed *Marvels*—a retelling of the first decade of the Marvel Universe as seen by *Daily Bugle* photographer Phil Sheldon—Busiek returns later this year with the highly anticipated sequel, *Marvels: Eye of the Camera*.

"This was originally conceived as a *Marvels* 10th anniversary special but it's kind of mushroomed into a mini-series that's more ambitious," said Busiek. "Long, long ago, back when the first *Marvels* was coming out, we'd talked about doing this as a 48-page one-shot. But when [Marvel Editor] Tom Brevoort started talking to me recently about doing some kind of *Marvels* sequel, I mentioned this idea and we decided there was a mini-series in here. It just kept getting bigger and bigger until it was six issues."

Although Ross' busy schedule didn't allow him to return, painter Jay Anacleto (*Aria*) stepped in, with Brian Haberlin digitally coloring over Anacleto's pencils.

"Alex said way back in 1993, 'Go ahead and do a sequel but I don't like those characters,'" relayed Busiek. "We contacted him, but never expected him to have the time or interest. But still, it would have been impolite not to ask."

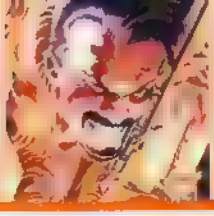
And Busiek knew it would be tough to replace the most well-known and popular painter in comics.

"We wanted somebody who would do an extraordinary art job but not have fans say, 'Oh, they got somebody as close to Alex Ross without being Alex Ross,'" said the writer. "We just said one of the requirements of the job was that you had to be able to make it look real. You had to be able to pull off the emotions. You have to be able to do the big 'wow' scenes, but you also have to be able to pull off a guy at the office thinking. Regardless of what it looked like last time, who would do an absolute knockout job? That's what led us to Jay."

DIDJA KNOW?

Before his full-time comic work, artist Jay Anacleto was a professional dentist in the Philippines.

Amazon astonished!
Toilet seat way colder than expected...
page 209



Fashion Watch '03:
The pompadour is back, and it's pissed... page 214

Marvelous Moments

Kurt Busiek's sequel to *Marvels*, *Marvels: Eye of the Camera*, will be filled with major moments from the history of the Marvel Universe. Busiek weighs in on the key Marvel events he plans to touch upon.

THE TRIAL OF YELLOWJACKET

(*Avengers* [vol. I] #228-#230)

"It was a big moment for the Avengers and a big moment for tarnishing heroes in the public eye. And in this particular case, it wasn't unfair tarnishing like [photographer] Phil [Sheldon] was railing about in the first series."

THE DARK PHOENIX SAGA

(*Uncanny X-Men* #234-#237)

"There's a lot going on around the 'Dark Phoenix Saga' that the general public wouldn't know, but when a big bird of flame erupts over Central Park, it will definitely get people's attention."

THE PUNISHER'S DEBUT

(*Amazing Spider-Man* [vol. I] #129)

"The Punisher will certainly be important and in fact, he's the cover feature to issue #3, which to some degree has Phil Sheldon following the darkening of the heroes and the Punisher is probably the first public avatar of that."

THE DEATH OF ELEKTRA

(*Daredevil* [vol. I] #181)

"It was a big moment for comic book readers and a big moment for the themes of danger and the darkening Marvel Universe. And since Phil Sheldon's good buddy [*Daily Bugle* reporter] Ben Urich was involved, you'd better believe that it will play a part."

THE DEATH OF THE X-MEN IN DALLAS

(*Uncanny X-Men* #225-#227)

"This is our last major Marvel event but it's also the cover feature to issue #5. That event always struck me as interesting because it was very public and very splashy. What really happened and how people react to it are very different. What that will mean to Phil will be very significant."

SECRET WARS II

(*Secret Wars II* #1-#9)

"While *Secret Wars* really took place off planet, *Secret Wars II* is a very different story. The United States got cracked in half! The superheroes had to sew it back up. When it comes to big events, the end of *Secret Wars II* is about as big as it gets." ■ MC

According to Busiek, the new series will fill in one very important gap in *Marvels*—the respective formations of the Avengers and Fantastic Four in the early '60s—before launching into post-1973 Marvel continuity and catching up with Sheldon, the narrator and centerpiece of the first series.

"Phil has more of a personal growth in this series," explained Busiek. "He's more of a focused character than an observing narrator this time around. Phil got to see the debut of the Golden Age Marvel heroes, but we never saw Phil at the birth of the Marvel Age. We went on to a time when the Avengers and the Fantastic Four were already up and running.

THEY SAID IT...

"We wanted somebody who would do an extraordinary art job but not have fans say, 'Oh, they got somebody as close to Alex Ross without being Alex Ross.'"
WRITER KURT BUSIEK

"It made sense to start [*Eye of the Camera*] with Phil at the dawn of the Marvel Age, the creation of the Fantastic Four and such," continued Busiek. "But issue #2 and beyond takes place around Marvel stories published post-'Death of Gwen Stacy' and all the way up to *Secret Wars II*—that's a big honking sprawling event that has a lot to do with what the Marvel Universe was going through at the time—and the 'death' of the X-Men in Dallas. We see the Punisher. We see the X-Men. We see Daredevil and Elektra. These are all important events for Phil."

Originally planned to coincide with *Marvels*' 10-year anniversary, Busiek explained the sequel may not be ready until the end of 2003 or early 2004.

"As with *Astro City*, this is not an easy series to write," revealed the scribe, who also has the highly anticipated *JLA/Avengers* project coming out this year. "And it's six issues long, so if we were producing it on a monthly basis, there'd be no problem getting it out on a monthly basis, but we're going to have to get a couple issues in the can before we project how long it's going to be before it gets done."

While it may be the end of the year before fans can get their hands on *Eye of the Camera* #1, Busiek also revealed an ongoing series is being talked about at Marvel for a possible mid-2004 launch.

"We've discussed doing an ongoing series, but it's only been discussed," teased the writer. "There aren't any firm plans, but we'll see." ■ MIKE COTTON

THE BUZZ BIN

ULTIMATE MARVEL Marvel's Ultimate line is about to get a fantastic new addition. Ultimate Universe architects Mark Millar (*Ultimates*) and Brian Michael Bendis (*Ultimate Spider-Man*), along with Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada and President Bill Jemas, are reportedly sitting down for a two-day summit to decide the Ultimate line's next title.

LOBO Fans waiting to see the follow-up to the 1991 *Lobo: Paramilitary Christmas* one-shot will have to wait no longer, as Keith Giffen is rumored to be working on a sequel, targeted for December. A certain WildStorm anti-hero superteam may be teaming up with the Bastich for the event!

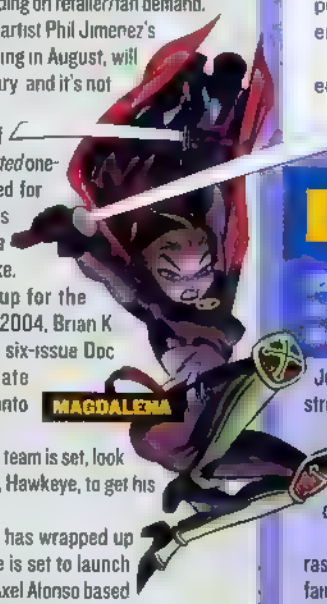
MARK MILLAR Rumors of Mark Millar taking over the regular *Punisher* series are untrue, but Millar does have Punisher work planned. Reportedly Millar will re-team with *Authority* mate Frank Quitely (*New X-Men*) for a Punisher mini-series in 2004.

ABC LINE Gene Ha is hard at work penciling *The 49ers*, the Alan Moore penned graphic novel that will serve as a prequel to his futuristic cop series, *Top 10*. There's no word on a release date for the anticipated project.

MARVEL The House of Ideas' almost two-year-old policy not to reprint single issues seems to be over. The publisher will reprint Epic's *Trouble* #1 by Mark Millar and Terry Dodson. Reportedly, Marvel will now reprint issues depending on retailer/fan demand.

X-MEN Writer Grant Morrison and artist Phil Jimenez's *New X-Men* #146–#147, both shipping in August, will feature the return of an old adversary and it's not who you think.

DARWYN COOKE Fresh off his work on July's *Witchblade Animated* one-shot, Darwyn Cooke may be headed for more animated action. Top Cow has plans to release a *Magdalena Animated* one-shot written by Cooke.



DOC OCK As Marvel ramps up for the release of "Spider-Man 2" in July 2004, Brian K Vaughan has signed on to write a six-issue Doc Ock mini-series, kicking off in late 2003, that will take fans deeper into the good doctor's psychosis.

HAWKEYE Although no creative team is set, look for Marvel Zombies' favorite archer, Hawkeye, to get his own mini-series in late 2003.

BRUCE JONES Bruce Jones has wrapped up his first *Kingpin* arc, and the scribe is set to launch another project with Marvel Editor Axel Alonso based on "yet another major Marvel character." Place your bets now!

X-MEN Kia Asamiya is currently working on *Steam Detectives* and *Silent Moebius*, two Japanese titles put on hold during his *Uncanny X-Men* run. Marvel plans to bring the artist back to the X-Universe soon, though it will probably be on a title other than *Uncanny*.

CROSSGEN CrossGen will unleash an innovative fantasy-themed project with a *Harry Potter* flavor in late 2003/early 2004 with art by a legendary Silver Age artist poised to return to comics.

MILLAR TIME

Writing blitz includes 4 new launches

Ask Mark Millar and he'll tell you—December belongs to him.

The Scottish writer, joined by some of the top artists in comics, plans to unleash a slew of new titles just before Christmas that take place in one universe, but will be published by four different companies.

"What I'm attempting here is essentially the first industry-wide crossover," claimed the writer of Marvel's *Ultimates* and *Trouble*. "It's really most of the interesting companies getting together in December and putting out a line of books, all written by me, and featuring the kind of comic books I've really always wanted to write."

The first six-issue mini-series from Top Cow, *Wanted*, which Millar describes as a continuation of the realistic superhero work he did on *The Authority*, will feature art by *Avengers* cover artist J.G. Jones. Then there's *The Chosen*, a three-issue mini-series set in the 1980s that features the return of Jesus Christ, shipping from Marvel with a still-to-be-determined artist. After that, there's *The Unfunnies*, a four-issue horror series from AIT/PlanetLar, which the writer describes as "the most disturbing thing I've ever written." Finally, Image will publish four one-shots that will range from horror to next generation superhero books.

Although artists are still being decided for certain projects and one-shots, Millar has targeted top-notch talent like John Cassaday, Frank Quitely and Terry Dodson. ■ MC

BOOK REVIEW

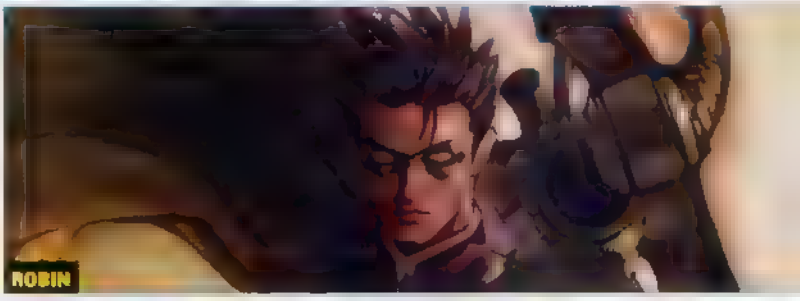
Judith O'Brien's novel *Mary Jane* is a highly enjoyable story involving the struggles and emotions of a teenage girl. The reader can easily relate to Mary Jane's feelings and experiences, making the author's message much more powerful. Mary Jane has to endure listening to her parents' constant fighting. If the reader has a similar problem, he or she will easily be able to understand what Mary Jane is going through.

Mary Jane experiences the same feelings of sadness and embarrassment of any teenager, like when her father arrives drunk at a science fair and accidentally breaks her project. She encounters problems with school and relationships, especially her changing relationship with Peter Parker after he's bitten by a radioactive spider and becomes Spider-Man.

Mary Jane discovers the real meaning of love and friendship through experiences she has: her father leaving her and her mother, Peter's parents and uncle getting killed, being forced to move many times, her inability to establish a close friend, and eventually becoming close with her mother. These events make Mary Jane stronger and help Peter get through difficult times. The reader will admire Mary Jane's strength as she overcomes obstacles with the dream of living her life to the fullest.

A FAIRY TALE ASSIGNMENT

Fables' writer Bill Willingham takes over 'Robin,' vows a living hell for Drake



Tim Drake's never had an easy life by any means, but come this December, Bill Willingham's gonna make it a living hell!

"Now the real training's gonna begin," warned the writer and creator of the Vertigo hit series *Fables*. "If Tim thought it was tough before, he hasn't seen anything yet!"

With help from penciler Rick Mays (*Zatanna: Everyday Magic*), Willingham's Boy Wonder Boot Camp kicks off when he takes over ongoing writing duties on DC's *Robin* starting with December's issue #121. And despite the fact that Drake has held the mantle of Robin for well over a decade now, that simply doesn't cut it in the eyes of the scribe.

"From the get-go, Tim's been kind of played like he already had what it takes to be Robin," explained Willingham. "But when you're playing second fiddle to Batman, there's no way you can possibly be ready for that just out of the blocks. He has to decide if this is the life he's cut out for."

However, intensive training from a relentless drill sergeant isn't the only obstacle Robin will have to overcome during Willingham and Mays' yearlong run. Robin will also be facing some serious villains as well—and if you're thinking the occasional fight with the Mad Hatter or the Ventriloquist, then you're sadly mistaken.

"We're going to be introducing a few new villains, one of which—I hope—will be the Robin's Joker," said Willingham. "Not a Joker-like character, but rather what the Joker is to Batman; that defining villain. The first arc will introduce him, and he's quite satisfyingly diabolical in my mind." ■ **CASEY SEIJAS**

THEY SAID IT...

"I began collecting comics voraciously in my teens as a substitute for a sex life."

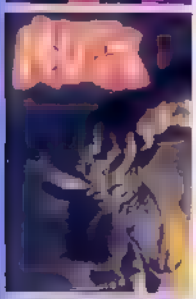
GRANT MORRISON

HEATINDEX

[illegible] during our research

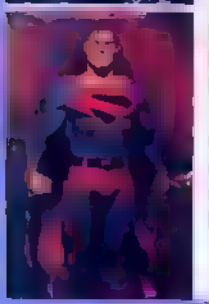
TRINITY #1 (DC) Writer and artist Matt Wagner (*Green Arrow* covers) perfectly captures the first team-up between DC's big three—Wonder Woman, Batman and Superman—in this three-issue mini-series. With art that reminds readers of a classic Golden Age look, this series is a must-read for DC loyalists

DAVID FINCH It's hard to follow artist Adam Kubert on any book, but David Finch's clean, amazingly detailed art on Brian Michael Bendis' first issue of *Ultimate X-Men* had us begging for more. Finch nailed every character from gritty Wolverine to an exuberant Peter Parker to the innocent Mary Jane Watson



LEANDRO FERNANDEZ If you're looking for an upcoming superstar comic book artist, look no further than Leandro Fernandez on *The Incredible Hulk*. Fernandez's Argentine-influenced art—think *100 Bullets*' Eduardo Risso—makes everyone from Bruce Banner to the Abomination leap off the page, and with an upcoming stint on Greg Rucka's *Wolverine*, this guy's ready for the big time.

OUTSIDERS (DC) Looks like Judd Winick's got another DC hit on his hands! With all the hype surrounding *Teen Titans*, *Outsiders* got overlooked, but after reading the first ish of this new series, we're definitely believers. Black Lightning's daughter Thunder and meta-bouncer Grace were badass additions, and it's always great to see characters like Metamorpho and Arsenal back in the spotlight.



KINGDOM COME ACTION FIGURES (DC Direct) DC Direct's all-new line of action figures based on the epic *Kingdom Come* mini-series are so incredibly sculpted, they look like an Alex Ross painting come to life right before your very eyes! This line definitely does justice to Ross' painted style, and is a must-have for Ross—and DC—fans.

TOP COW SURVIVOR

'Witchblade' readers pick who dies next

"American Idol" never took things *this* far. Top Cow turns popular voting into a matter of life and death this fall with the launch of a Witchblade "death poll." Two major characters are slated to bite the dust in March's double-sized *Witchblade* #75—but starting with *Witchblade* #70, readers will have the power to choose who the unlucky souls will be.

"I want to culminate in a big, epic storyarc in *Witchblade* #70-75," explained series writer David Wohl. "We toyed with the fact that the Witchblade is the main character—which means I could kill Sara Pezzini and have the Witchblade go to somebody else! Another idea was killing one of our major villains. [Top Cow President] Matt [Hawkins] suggested, 'Why don't we let the fans decide?'"

Itchin' to vote? Check out October's *Witchblade* #70 for 12 possible victims. Then, log onto **www.wizarduniverse.com** to vote for two characters to "save." An updated safe list will appear every month in *Witchblade*, with the final four announced in issue #74. All four characters will be drawn in their own "kill shots," and the chosen two will get the axe in issue #75! After that, a brand new era begins for *Witchblade*, with a top-secret new creative team slated to jump onboard. ■ **RICHARD HO**

WORLD'S FINEST

[illegible] *Superman/Batman* series, we turn [illegible] the old *Finest* series featuring the [illegible] "genre" of the Golden Age. We list three classic tales mixed with one fake story. Five bucks says you can't spot the phony!

"The Case of the Mother Goose Mysteries"
Can even the World's Greatest Detective—teamed with the Man of Steel—outwit the combined intellect of Humpty Dumpty, Mother Goose and an orange cat playing a fiddle?

"Infinite Evolutions of Superman & Batman"
The Man of Steel devolves into a Neanderthal Kryptonian (who hates trains) while Batman evolves into a giant-headed future human that proves how smart he is by pointing at Superman and laughing.

"The Abominable Brats"
The Dark Knight Detective and the Man of Steel relax after a trying case by going camping, only to have Superboy throw lit firecrackers at them and Batboy empty a bucket of frogs on them.

"The Supergirl Batgirl Plot"
The two female sidekicks strip Bats and Supes of their powers and giggle behind a fence while their mentors sit stranded on the side of the road beside the Batmobile with a bum tire.

[illegible]

ECHO, MACK BACK ON 'DAREDEVIL'

'Kabuki' creator returns for six-issue writing and painting stint this September

David Mack couldn't get Echo out of his head.

Echo, the Native American deaf woman Mack introduced in his first run on *Daredevil*, steals the spotlight from the blind vigilante starting with September's issue #51 and #52. Mack jumps on board the title for a six-issue stint, which revolves around Echo's vague history. Mack said Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada recommended that the details of Echo's past be explored.

"While it is a Daredevil story, and Daredevil is in it, it focuses on Echo a lot because this is supposed to define her character for future use," revealed Mack.

In the last Echo story, (*Daredevil* #9-15) readers met Maya Lopez, a woman with the remarkable ability to duplicate any action she sees. Maya falls in love with Matt Murdock, but begins the worst love triangle in history when the Kingpin convinces her that DD killed her father. She battles the crimson hero as Echo to get revenge but finds out that Matt is Daredevil. Maya realizes she's been duped and blinds the Kingpin before disappearing from Matt's life.

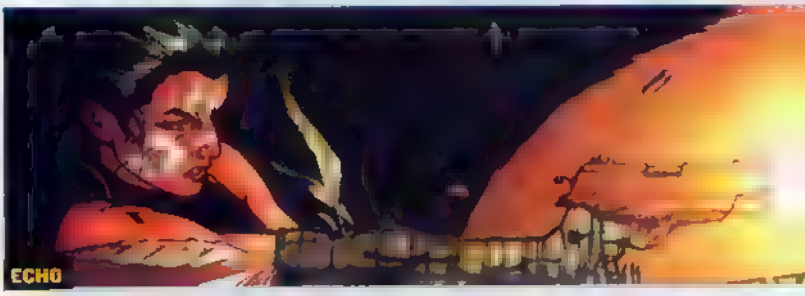
This new arc, geared as a sequel to the previous story, will catch readers up with her whereabouts and what she's been up to since she vanished.

"This story is her in present day but chronicles her growing up from childhood to the present. A lot of it is her coming to terms with everything. 'What does she do in life?' is essentially what is tied up in this," said Mack. "I think it's going to be a nice contrast from the regular [Brian Michael] Bendis/[Alex] Maleev story."

Mack's *Daredevil* homecoming should be exciting—the *Kabuki* artist will be painting the series *and* writing it.

"I wrote a DD story and I painted a DD story, but I haven't done them both at the same time," explained Mack. ■

RICKEY PURDIN



TRIVIA TIME

1. Jerry Siegel
2. Forrest J. Ackerman
3. Gerry Conway/ John Romita Sr.
4. Mort Weisinger/ George Rapp

A. Punisher
B. Green Arrow
C. The Spectre
D. Vampirella

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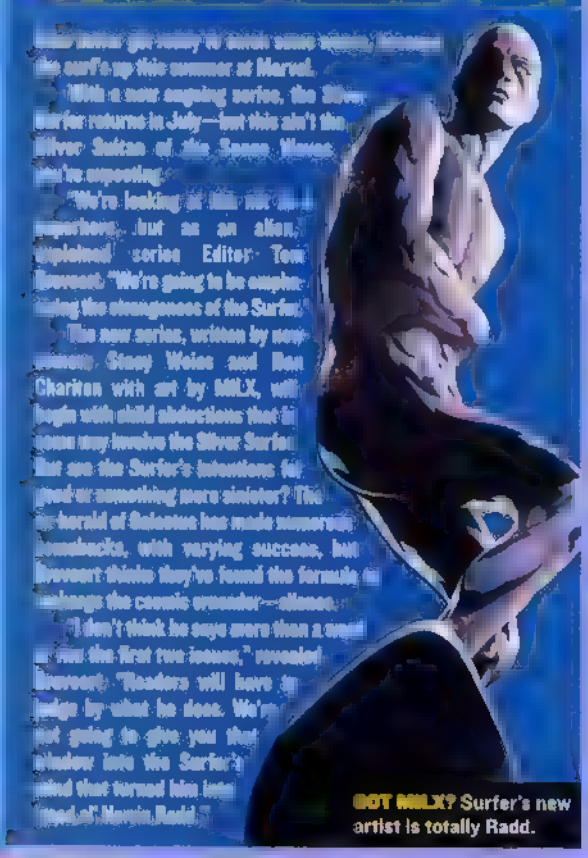
CHARACTER TO WATCH

SILVER SURFER



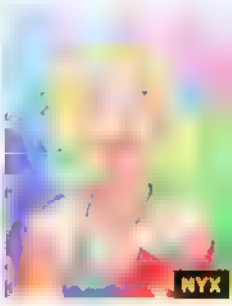
GOT MILX? Surfer's new artist is totally Radd.

CITY X-SCAPE

Marvel's mutants set up shop in NYC

New York stands symbolically as the land of opportunity—unless you happen to be a mutant.

The stars of Marvel's *NYX*, a group of X-gene positive kids, will learn this the hard way starting in September, as they prep for survival on NYC's mean streets in this new ongoing series from Marvel.



NYX

Collaborating on the project are fan-favorite artist Josh Middleton (*New Mutants* covers) and Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada, who handles the writing duties for the first six issues.

NYX sets itself apart from the other mutant books by distancing itself from the Xavier Institute and his band of X-Men, instead focusing on these abandoned mutants and their survival in the big city.

"It's a touch of realism to the mutant experience," Quesada said.

That touch of realism means they won't hop in the Blackbird and travel the world in search of the next mutant menace.

"They're going to deal with a six- to seven-block range of problems, things that happen in their immediate world," Quesada said.

The female-dominated cast—all designed by Middleton—are tougher than usual and come with their own set of problems.

"Some of them are not very likable at first," noted Quesada. "What is going to be wonderful is to watch them go from someone you may not think is a decent person and all of a sudden have them find the errors of their ways and turn it around."

Added Middleton: "*NYX* is the prettiest, ughest, sweetest, meanest, most kickass thing to come down the pike in ages." ■ **DANNY CONSTANTINO**

ASPEN/COW LEGAL BATTLE HEATS UP

Clash over 'Fathom,' other Turner-created properties

In early June, both Michael Turner's Aspen MLT publishing company and Top Cow Productions filed lawsuits in Los Angeles to decide which company owns the right to publish Turner's creations *Fathom*, *Soulfire*, *Ekos* and *Checkmate*.

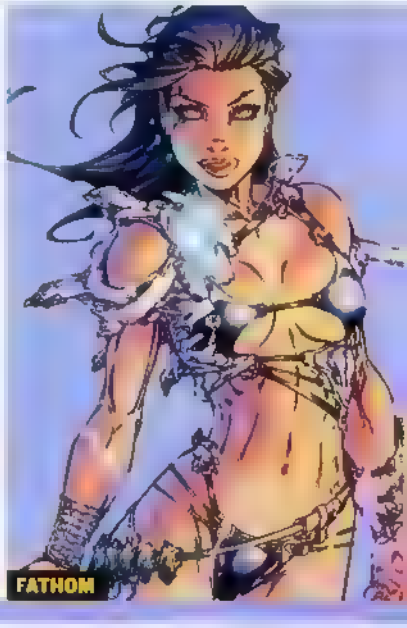
According to a Top Cow press release, Turner signed a contract affording the Cow rights to each property. The release states in part, "During his relationship with Top Cow and in exchange for paying him nearly one million dollars, Mr. Turner agreed to and signed contracts that afforded Top Cow rights into *Fathom*, *Soulfire*, *Ekos* and *Checkmate*."

Turner's first two issues of *Aspen Entertainment Presents*—scheduled to ship in June—and the upcoming *Soulfire* with writer Jeph Loeb—have been put on hold because of pending litigation.

Aspen's press release disputes many of Top Cow's claims, most notably the fact that Top Cow owns the rights to Turner's stable of characters and ideas.

"In August of 1997, Turner entered into a license agreement with Top Cow for use of Turner's creator-owned work, *Fathom*," states the release. "Turner owned *Fathom* and granted Top Cow an exclusive license to produce and distribute *Fathom*-related works. The agreement expired no later than August of 2002, after which time Top Cow was not authorized to distribute further Fathom products."

Sources claim Turner and Top Cow Founder Marc Silvestri were attempting to negotiate a deal to avoid trial. ■ **MC**



FATHOM

BUSIEK TAPS HIS ANIMAL INSTINCTS

Dark Horse version of 'Ultimate Conan' will stay true to original roots

Kurt Busiek's latest hero won't be wearing tights. In fact, he won't be wearing much of anything.

Busiek opts for fur underwear instead of spandex as he writes the relaunch of *Conan the Barbarian*, an ongoing series coming in early 2004. To reintroduce comic readers to the Cimmerian, Dark Horse followed a trend set by Marvel's Ultimate line: take a character, strip it to its roots and start anew in a modern way.

"Call it Ultimate Conan, call it the return of a much-loved icon from the 1970s and 1980s, call it the first and best sword and sorcery hero back to reclaim his throne," said Busiek.

Having never written a character like Conan, who is unfettered by the superhero status quo, Busiek couldn't be more excited. He's also thrilled that Cary Nord (*Daredevil*) will be drawing *Conan*.

"I think Cary's run on this book is going to be as definitive for the modern era as Barry Smith's was in the 1970s," noted Busiek. "He's blending a pulp feel with modern graphics and convincing design that makes this fantasy world really come alive. I can add that his babes are gorgeous."

The series kicks off when Conan leaves his native Cimmeria for the first time, and is forced to deal with a new and strange world. It will traverse his life chronologically, adapting original stories.

"But only originals," insisted Busiek. "We're building on what [Robert E.] Howard wrote...we prefer to go to the core and build something new from there."

The first arc will include adaptations of classic Conan stories like "The Frost Giant's Daughter" and "Tower of the Elephant." In keeping true to his barbaric roots, Conan will also wreak bloody vengeance on those who betray him.

■ HEIDI WARD

THEY SAID IT...

"I'm the X-Men's greatest villain. I've dumped 30 years of sh-- on their heads."

WRITER CHRIS CLAREMONT

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CRANKCALLS

A REAL CLARK KENT IN KANSAS

WIZARD: First of all, I want to assure you that your secret is safe with me.

KENT: My secret?

I see, you're playing along. Sneaky. So, do you wear fake glasses for disguise purposes, or are you actually nearsighted?

Wha—? I don't wear glasses.

Doesn't it get uncomfortable wearing Spandex underneath your work clothes all the time?

Wearing what? Spandex?! You think I wear Spandex under my clothes?

Have you ever accidentally broken something because you forgot your own strength?

Uh, I broke a chair by sitting in it once, but I'm not sure what you mean. Why are you asking me these questions? Who are you?

Ever feel uncomfortable getting changed in a phone booth?

Oh, I get it. You're one of those a--holes who thinks just 'cuz my name is Clark Kent that I'm Superman.

No, of course I don't think you're Superman [*wink wink*].

Yeah, you're one of those d—heads who gets off by calling people up in the middle of the night and wasting their time asking them useless questions

Well, your name is Clark Kent, isn't it?

Yeah it's Clark Kent A--hole.

What's it feel like when you touch Kryptonite? Is it like a burning sensation when you pee?

How does it feel when you get a piece of Kryptonite stuck up your a--, huh? I'm sick of your f---ing questions!

FROM FAN TO THE MAN

G.I. Joe fan pens four-issue *Frontline* arc

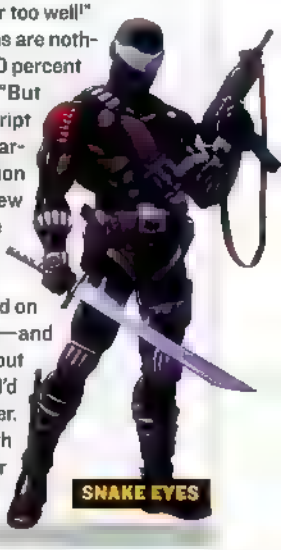
The best way to break into comics? Stick with what you know.

That's the strategy *G.I. Joe* fan Brandon Jerwa used to land a four-issue gig on Devil's Due/Image's *G.I. Joe: Frontline*.

"I figured that if I was going to try to take a stab at comic book writing, I should try it with something I know," explained Jerwa, whose unsolicited script caught the eye of Devil's Due head honcho Josh Blaylock. "And I know *G.I. Joe* far too well!"

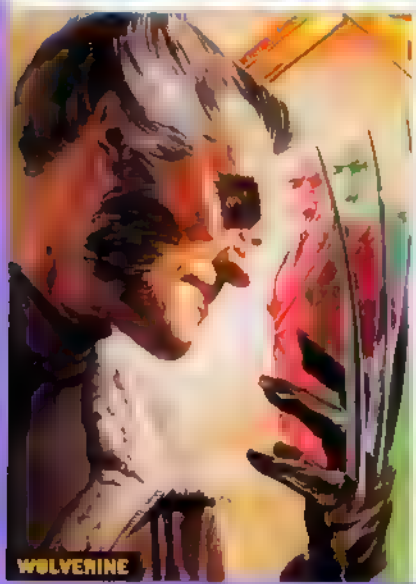
According to Blaylock, fan submissions are nothing new for Devil's Due. "But only about 10 percent of them are good!" laughed Blaylock. "But Brandon made it through the pile. His script was solid, and he really pulled off the characterization—and given his determination during the submission process, we knew he'd be reliable in terms of getting the scripts done on deadline. So we decided to give him a shot!"

Jerwa's four-issue arc will be released on a rapid-fire weekly schedule in August—and needless to say, he couldn't be happier about his big break. "If I were any more excited, I'd have to be twins!" gushed the newbie writer. "To start my career in comic writing with something I love as much as G.I. Joe is far too much to handle." ■ **RICHARD HO**



'ORIGIN II'? NOT QUITE, BUT CLOSE

Jenkins' mini-series to focus on the end of Wolverine, not the beginning



When Marvel tapped Paul Jenkins to write another Wolverine story, the scribe wanted to get as far away from *Origin* as possible—about 300 years away, as it happens.

Jenkins, who penned the Wolverine origin tale, *Origin: The True Story of Wolverine*, teams with artist Claudio Castellini (*CrossGen Chronicles*), for October's *Wolverine: The End*, a peek at the last days of Marvel's favorite mutant.

"When we first started talking about the last Wolverine story, Marvel thought it would be cool if I did it, since I did the first story," explained Jenkins. "This story takes place about 75 to 100 years from now. With *Origin*, our theme was 'What made Logan into Wolverine?' If you break down the last story of Wolverine, we're figuring out what he wants and what our final statement is with this character."

The six-issue mini-series finds Wolverine everywhere from Japan to the U.S. on a mystery quest.

"What this journey is for is really what the story is about. *Origin* was just part one," revealed Jenkins. "What does Wolverine want? What's the most important thing in his life? Is it his memory? What drives this man at the end of his life? This makes a fine bookend to *Origin*."

Fans who've clamored for a sequel to *Origin* will have to wait. But the British scribe hasn't totally written off writing a sequel to the highly acclaimed series.

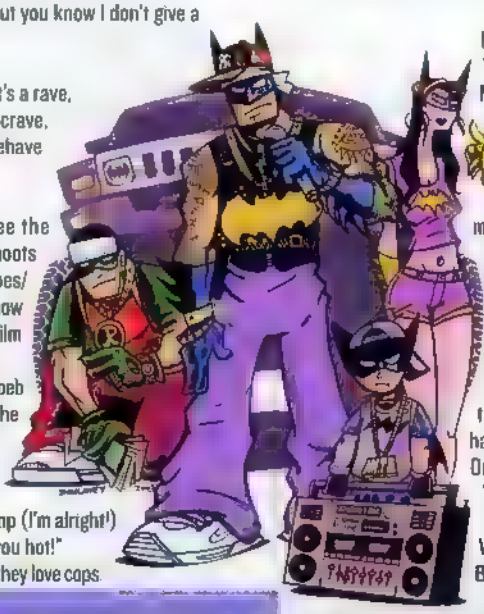
"*Origin II* isn't for right now," said Jenkins. "That's for later. With *Origin* we told the first chapter, we raised a lot of cool questions. Who knows what we'll do next?" ■**MC**

KICKIN' IT 'IN DA CAVE'

With *Batman* tearing up the charts these days, we figured the hit comic needed a theme song. So strap on some bling-bling and sing this to the tune of 50 Cent's "In Da Club." We call it, "In Da Cave."

Go, Go, Go, Go Go, Go, Go Robin,
You're a hostage/I gotta save yo' punk ass one mo' time,
I'm savin' yo' punk ass all of the time/But you know I don't give a damn about you this time!
[Chorus]
You can find me in the cave/Party like it's a rave,
I gots the fly gadgets that all the ladies crave,
I'm doin' the Bat-ust if you wanna misbehave
So come ride the Bat-wave

When I pull up on the scene you see the Batmobile on dubs/When the Joker shoots the place up I'm throwing bows on my foes/Ladies heard I'm bad now they wanna show me love/When Schumacher helms your film you better run,
But homie plenty changed since Lee and Loeb showed up/I'm tops on the charts and the X-Men are lookin' up,
If you watch how I move you'll mistake me for a playa or pimp/Bane tried to snap my spine but I don't walk with a limp (I'm alright!)
In Gotham all the people say "Batman you hot!"
They fear me, I wanna 'em to love me like they love cops



When Scarecrow, Riddler and Penguin are goin' plumb loco
Their plan to poison people puts the town in a chokehold
But I'm feeling good man, my money on my mind,
I got billions as Bruce Wayne, drinkin' thousand-dollar wine,
Selina Kyle digs my style and she's feeling my flow, Gordon's on the Bat-phone but me and shorty gotta roll! [Chorus 2X]

My dead folks left me all the dough,
That bought me all my fancy things,
My cave, my cars, my jets, my tools,
Look sucka I'm a member of the JLA!

You should love me, way more than you hate/Sucka you mad, I thought that you'd be happy I made it/I'm that Bat by the bar toasting to the good life/You that goofy ass sucka stuck in Arkham for life,
When my crew gets to bitchin' in the cave, it's on,
Alfred's giving me static, then it's time to get gone,
If the roof's on fire, it's probably Ra's Al Ghul,
If you're talking about Talia sucka I ain't yo' fool,
Tell you what Bob Kane said about a superstitious cowardly lot/If the crazies hate then let 'em hate/And watch the bodies pile up,
Or I can go upside your head with a steel Batarang
You know where I'll freakin' be! [Chorus 2X]
Don't act like you don't know where we be, Nightwing,
We in the cave all the time, so pop, pop off Dick,
Birds of Prey! We out... ■ **DJ ANDY SERWIN**

CANITBEDONE?

TELEPORTATION

Sure, it looks great in "X2." But in the real world, teleportation is nothing but a comic book pipe dream—right? Well, if you know a thing or two about physics, it ain't as crazy as it sounds.

In comics, Nightcrawler teleports by opening gateways into the "Darkforce" dimension (air rushing in causes the trademark "bamf," the brimstone is Darkforce atmosphere that escapes when the gateways are opened). And while alternate dimensions may be fiction, the idea of opening a tunnel to travel from one spot to another is closer to scientific reality.

Just ask Professor Costas Efthimiou of the University of Central Florida. "Based on the theories of general relativity, it's conceivable that Nightcrawler travels through a tunnel in space called an Einstein-Rosen bridge, or a wormhole," explained Efthimiou. "Nightcrawler's body functions allow him to manipulate energy to create a wormhole between two locations in space." Since a wormhole bends time and space in funny ways, Nightcrawler basically takes a shortcut from point A to B, arriving instantaneously. "Since it's the distance that's conveniently shortened," added Efthimiou, "the speed of light is never breached, so no laws are broken!" Bottom line? The *exact* science behind Nightcrawler's teleportation remains fuzzy as the elf himself—but that doesn't mean it *couldn't* happen. ■ **RH**

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MEET THE NEW MR. FANTASTIC

Noted playwright tapped to take over 'Fantastic Four'

New *Fantastic Four* writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa has one request of fans—don't judge him until you read his first issue.

That's going to be tough with the swirling controversy surrounding Marvel's First Family. Current *FF* writer Mark Waid was fired in June (**see sidebar**) and Aguirre-Sacasa was selected as his replacement, a decision that drew the ire of fans. Series artist Mike Wieringo also exited in protest; a new artist has yet to be named.

While some writers might be fearful of a fan base that's already figuratively burned him in effigy six months before his first issue (February 2004's *FF* #509), the playwright and Washington D.C. native explained he'd rather have fans excited about *Fantastic Four* than ambivalent. And even though rumors have arisen that the title will be altered from the high-concept, action-adventure series that Waid helped develop into a co-writing venture for Marvel President Bill Jemas, the new writer said little of what fans know is true.

"Since I heard about this controversy, I have been reading the message boards," said Aguirre-Sacasa. "Some of it's just not true and some of it's just mean spirited. But I am glad the fans are so passionate about these characters. I'd much rather have people have strong opinions about the FF and who's writing them than be disinterested. I think Mark Waid's a great writer and I just hope people stick around. All families go through changes and this is just a change the Fantastic Four is going to go through."

A lifelong comic fan who's adapted pop culture and comic references into many of his award-winning plays, Aguirre-Sacasa says he wants to focus on the family aspect of the series over cosmic bad guys or would-be world conquerors.

"What I'm trying to do is really ground the Fantastic Four's adventures in a more realistic way," Aguirre-Sacasa said. "The adventures starting out will be a little less cosmic and more based in the real world. What if the Fantastic Four was really living in New York City and were trying to be a family?

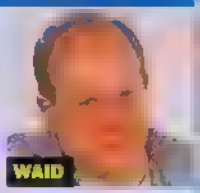
"I still want to have very real stakes, things of consequence," he continued. "Even if there isn't a galaxy devouring supervillain in the first storyarc there will be real consequences and a pretty devastating effect on the family."

Details about his first four-issue arc, titled "Wolf at the Door," are top secret—but the writer revealed it will focus on the FF's connection to New York City and its inhabitants.

"New York is incredibly important to this book," he explained. "I think the first line of the series is, 'New York City, the greatest city on Earth.' This isn't going to turn into a humor book. But there will be humor. What happens when regular New Yorkers see the Fantastic Four? This is going to be a very big part of their universe." ■ **MC**

GO FORTH New *FF* writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa plans on stressing family matters.

'WHY WAS I FIRED?'



Shocked doesn't even come close to describing how writer Mark Waid feels. Waid, who'd reinvigorated the *Fantastic Four* with a new take, was fired, making way for a new writer and direction. But the *Kingdom Come* scribe's still confused on why he was axed from a book he'd helped rocket into the Top 25 of Diamond's sales chart.

"I knew that there was some concerns about making the book human, but I thought we were all on the same page," said Waid.

Days after he was fired, Waid went online with claims that Marvel President Bill Jemas would take over the book and turn the title into more of a suburban comedy, a claim denied by Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada.

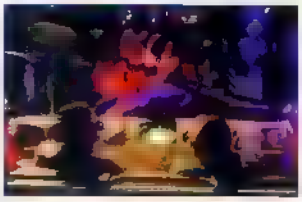
"I have no idea what's going on," said an exasperated Waid. "According to Joe's letter, they're not doing what I thought they were doing. But if that's not what I'm not doing, then why was I fired? I've been told I don't understand what the new direction is, so now I'm even more confused as to why I was fired." ■ **MC & RH**

WANNA FLY LIKE A SUPERHERO?

WIZARD runs down the 10 coolest superhero-themed rides in the U.S.

Want to soar like Superman or swing through the streets of New York next to Spider-Man? Well, buckle up and strap in, because *Wizard*, along with some help from the Rollercoaster Enthusiasts of America, has your complete guide to the 10 best superhero themed amusement park rides in the U.S.

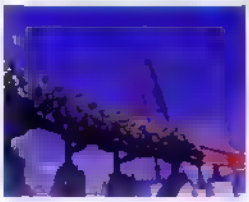
1 | THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF SPIDER-MAN—UNIVERSAL STUDIOS ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE (Orlando, Fla.)



Using cutting edge technology, this ride combines futuristic 3-D projection, motion base simulation and amazing sets to thrust riders into the life of the Web-slinger, battling villains like the Green Goblin, Doc Ock and Hydra. Reality is blurred once guests strap on their 3-D glasses and enter the amazing world that this ride has to offer. Using real fire and water as props, some riders even believe they are 400 feet in the sky during a simulated free fall sequence. And the wait on line is even cool as fans get to snake their way through the prop-filled *Daily Bugle*.

RATING ★★★★★

2 | SUPERMAN: RIDE OF STEEL—SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND (Agawam, Mass.)



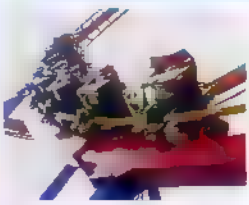
This "mega coaster" drops riders over 220 feet underground before hurtling them along a 5,400-foot journey around the park. Due to the extreme weightlessness, or airtime, throughout the ride, many enthusiasts claim this to be the best superhero themed coaster.

RATING ★★★★★

3 | INCREDIBLE HULK—UNIVERSAL STUDIOS ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE (Orlando, Fla.)

Set in Bruce Banner's lab, the roar of this ride is created by hollow tracks and can be heard throughout the park. The seven-looping coaster, colored Hulk green, uses a launch system to send the heavily themed train on its way. The first inversion is uniquely taken high above the park, where most coasters would drop you to the ground first. Quite possibly the best roller coaster in Orlando. **RATING:** ★★★★

4 | SUPERMAN: ULTIMATE FLIGHT—SIX FLAGS GREAT AMERICA (Gurnee, Ill.)



This coaster starts by putting riders into the horizontal Superman flying position to give fans the most realistic representation of Superman's flight power ever. Riders are sent through many different elements including a very intense pretzel-loop. **RATING:** ★★★★

5 | RIDDLER'S REVENGE—SIX FLAGS MAGIC MOUNTAIN (Valencia, Calif.)

A coaster where you travel in the standing position, there are six inversions to leave even the most hardened rider's stomach in a spin. A ride that is considered by many enthusiasts to be the best stand-up coaster in existence **RATING:** ★★★★

BEST OF THE REST

6 | BATMAN: THE RIDE—SIX FLAGS GREAT AMERICA (Gurnee, Ill.) **RATING** ★★★★

7 SUPERMAN: KRYPTON COASTER—SIX FLAGS FIESTA TEXAS (San Antonio, Tex.) **RATING:** ★★★★

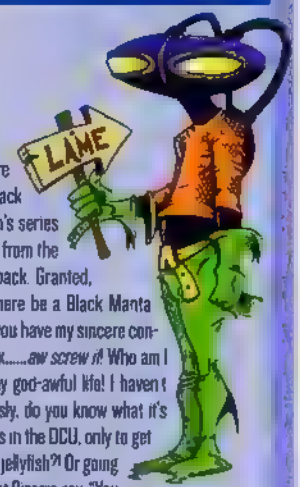
8 BATMAN KNIGHT FLIGHT SIX FLAGS WORLDS OF ADVENTURE (Aurora, Ohio) **RATING:** ★★★★

9 BATMAN AND ROBIN: THE CHILLER—SIX FLAGS GREAT ADVENTURE (Jackson, NJ) **RATING:** ★★★

10 SUPERMAN: ULTIMATE ESCAPE—SIX FLAGS WORLDS OF ADVENTURE (Aurora, Ohio) **RATING:** ★★★ ■ MC

AN OPEN LETTER

TO: Aquaman
FROM: Black Manta
RE: Your title getting sunk



Hello!

Black Manta here. Now, I know you're thinking, "Here comes that weird-talking Black Manta, I bet he's gonna gloat about Aquaman's series getting canned," but nothing could be further from the truth. Everyone knows the King and I go way back. Granted, we've had our share of run-ins, but would there be a Black Manta without an Aquaman? For what it's worth Art, you have my sincere condolences on your book getting the untimely ax.....*aw screw it!* Who am I kidding? This is the greatest freakin' day of my god-awful life! I haven't stopped monotone laughing since May! Seriously, do you know what it's been like being one of the coolest looking mofo's in the DCU, only to get my ass handed to me by Aquaman and a gang of jellyfish?! Or going back to the Legion of Doom and hearing that idiot Bizarro say, "You beat Aquaman again?! Me cry! Me cry directed at you!" No, please, allow me to answer that since I happen to be an authority on the subject—*it sucks manta ass!*

But not anymore! Now that I've sort of defeated Aquaman, I can once again devote my time to scouring the Seven Seas for its riches and bioengineering more Manta Men without fear of getting attacked by a mob of unruly tropical fish. And I'm definitely planning on picking up that world domination thing I started a couple of years ago. Hmm, maybe Geoff Johns could write a mini-series starring me...I can see it now, *Black Manta: Black on Both Sides*. That's right baby, Black Manta and Geoff Johns are back up in this piece! Now, let's get this party started right, someone get me a bottle of Cristal and a dolphin right now! That's my word!

SUPERMAN

DC unveils plan to overhaul Superman line in 2004 with Jim Lee/Brian Azzarello monthly series on tap

Superman may be alive and kickin' now, but that won't stop the Man of Steel from being reborn next March. Big plans are in store for the entire Super-franchise as DC lines up a who's who of A-list creators to reinvigorate the core Superman titles. The dream team of writer Brian Azzarello (*100 Bullets*) and artist Jim Lee (*Batman*) will take over *Superman*, Greg Rucka will tackle *Adventures of Superman* and Chuck Austen will jump on board *Action Comics*—with the artists on *Adventures* and *Action* to be announced at Wizard World Chicago Aug. 8-10.

Lee was also riding high following his stint with the Dark Knight—so when the opportunity to tackle the Man of Steel came up, the artist decided to strike while the iron was hot, delaying his six-issue follow-up to "Hush" until after his *Superman* run.

"It just made sense to do it now," explains Lee. "This is the time to do it, when you've got the momentum of *Batman* going forward. The question has always been, 'Why can't Superman sell?' And I have a firm belief that Superman *can* sell. He's the ultimate authority figure, and I think there's a lot of great stories you can do with the character. I think a lot of people have written him off unfairly. So can we reinvigorate the Superman franchise? The challenge is exciting to me."

The reason for the overhaul? "Sometimes you just have to change things up," notes Superman Group Editor Eddie Berganza. "He's a tough character to deal with, and every once in a while you have to come in fresh and start over. And with all the changes going on in world events, we wanted to look at what we can do differently with Superman. Our goal is to get everyone to read the books and say, 'Oh, wow!' And with the creators we've got, I think we're going to succeed."

With Azzarello's 12-issue *Superman* run coming on the heels of his upcoming six-issue stint on *Batman*, the *100 Bullets* scribe is stoked about playing with DC's big guns back to back. "I'm thrilled," laughs Azzarello. "I'm working with the 500-pound gorilla! It's like they gave me the keys to the Ferrari and the Lamborghini at the same time and said, 'Don't wreck the car, kid. Either one of them!' We'll see what kind of job I do—hopefully the cars won't be put away with too many dents and scratches on them."

Expect each of the three core titles to stand on its own, with common threads connecting them in various ways. "Each book will focus on different things," confirms Berganza. "They'll be connected in the sense that the writers will be picking things up from each other in certain areas. When we do something drastic to Superman or any of the supporting cast, *that* will be reflected. But even without having talked to each other yet, Brian, Greg and Chuck are already moving in the same direction!"

As for where that direction will take readers? "You'll just have to wait and see!" teases Azzarello. "Just like with 'Hush,' we'll see if we can stay hush-hush until the books come out."

One thing's for sure: The creative changes are only the tip of the iceberg for what's in store for the Superman family—and perhaps for other DC mainstays as well! "From what we've talked about so far, you really get the sense that big things are going to come out of this," teases Lee.

■ RICHARD HO

BRIAN AZZARELLO
JIM LEE
DC COMICS

STEELWORKERS

THE DILLY-O DC Comics has lined up a galaxy of superstar creators—including penciler Jim Lee (*Batman*) and writers Greg Rucka (*Wonder Woman*), Chuck Austen (*Uncanny X Men*) and Brian Azzarello (*100 Bullets*)—to take over the Superman titles starting in March of 2004.

WHY YOU CARE Hello?!? Did you happen to read the roster of creators listed above? Following the same formula that made *Batman* one of the best and hottest books of 2003, DC's putting A-list talent on all of its Superman titles to give them a boost.

DID YOU KNOW? *Wizard* commissioned Lee to pencil this Superman artwork (opposite page) for our Wizard World Chicago Convention Program cover, but it was so freakin' cool, we had to share it with our readers before the show kicks off Aug. 8-10!

NEW X-MEN

Top Cow founder Marc Silvestri returns to the X-Men with Grant Morrison's tale of a future gone horribly wrong

Forget the hype, anticipation and historical significance surrounding Marc Silvestri's upcoming run on *New X-Men*. There's only one thing on the superstar artist's mind as he cranks out pages on his drawing board

How much fun he's having

GRANT MORRISON
MARC SILVESTRI
MARVEL

BACKTOTHEFUTURE

THE DILLY-O Marc Silvestri teams up with Grant Morrison for a four-issue *New X-Men* arc that thrusts the team into a dark and foreboding future where heroes are villains, and villains are heroes.

WHY YOU CARE Silvestri—whose last work was March's *EVO* #1—returns to pencil the X-Men, which catapulted the Top Cow founder to superstardom 11 years ago.

DID YOU KNOW? Silvestri does some of his best work after sundown—so now that he's back on a regular penciling schedule, he's back to his vampire ways, pulling all-nighters in the studio drawing alongside Top Cow young guns like Francis Manapul and Eric Basaldua.

"On a strictly creative level, it's been a blast," gushes Silvestri, who returns to the mutants that made him a superstar artist in the late 1980s and early '90s before launching his Top Cow company. "These X-Men are different than the X-Men I'm used to—a lot of the characters have changed from when I was drawing them, and some old favorites are portrayed differently. So that's pretty exciting. But bottom line, I'm having a blast."

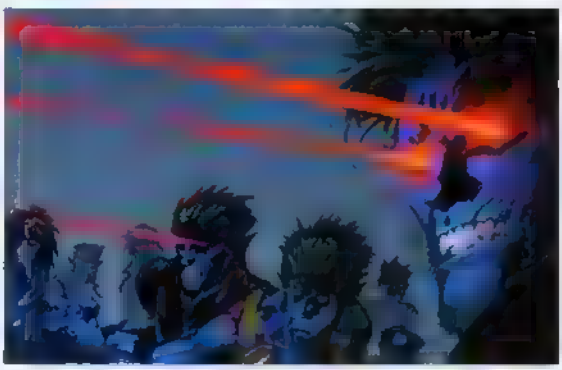
Odds are fans will, too, when Silvestri's four-issue arc begins with December's *New X-Men* #151. The monumental deal between Marvel and Top Cow not only treats readers to a project that approaches the artistic caliber of Jim Lee's *Batman* run, but it also gives writer Grant Morrison a chance to go wild in crafting a mind-blowing vision of the X-Men's future 100 years from now.

"It's set in a future where mutants are the dominant segment of the populace and humans are the absolute minority—so that creates some interesting dynamics right off the bat," reveals Silvestri. "Grant's such an imaginative guy, and when people see some of this stuff, they're going to go, 'Whoa, what the hell is that?!' Even as I'm reading the story, I can't wait to get to the drawing board because it's so cool. He's got this way of making the absurd believable and enjoyable. I'm having a great time, and quite frankly, this is one of the highlights of my career."

Beyond that, both Marvel and Top Cow remain tight-lipped about the story specifics. "I don't want to spoil too much for the readers," teases Silvestri. "But I can say that in some cases, what was once good has become bad. So hopefully, that's cryptic enough to whet people's appetite."

Silvestri's return to Marvel also heralds Marvel/Top Cow crossover comics in 2004. The character matchups include Wolverine/Witchblade and a team-up to be determined.

"Marvel gets me to draw the X-Men, and Top Cow gets to play with some Marvel characters in our universe," he says. "It's a win-win for them and for us—and quite honestly, I think it's going to be fun for the fans." ■ RICHARD HO



TWISTED FUTURE 100 years from now, these Nightcrawler/Cyclops hybrids (above) are evil, yet a Sentinel (far right) is good.

ALAN MOORE

Confirming his retirement, the writer shares his plan for destroying the ABC Universe and ignoring the 'League' film

BY MIKE COTTON

WIZARD There's been a lot of debate about your recent comments that you're retiring from comics. Are you really retiring or is this just a brief sabbatical?

MOORE: I've made it very, very clear [to DC/Wildstorm] that I'm not taking a brief sabbatical. This is me getting out of mainstream comics. I will continue to do *League of Extraordinary Gentleman* from time to time but there is no schedule for that. I'm going to need a long break after I finish my current work because this is the end of 25 years of work without a holiday. I am wrapping up the ABC line

When can we expect your last issues to ship?

I had hoped to have it done by this November, but I am committed to finishing everything that I have committed myself to doing, so if it takes longer than that, it'll take longer. Maybe it'll take until the beginning of next year, I don't know. I intend to end the ABC world with Promethea in the final issues—scheduled to be issue #32. That will be the end of the world for all the other ABC books as well, with the exception of League that is separate.

Does this mean the ABC line is dead, outside of *League*?

I'd be quite happy to see other writers take up the books. The last time I talked to Scott [Dunbier, Wildstorm group editor] he said there might be a thing where specials would relate to the characters rather than continuing series. But if all the *Wizard* readers would like to see the series continue with other writers, they should make their presence felt and write in to Wildstorm. There will be the opportunity for stories set before that and there might even be the possibility of stories set after that. But they'd have to be very ingeniously handled.

What are your plans for *League*?

The next *League* series will at least partly be set in the 20th century. This is when we do it, but we've got tentative plans for the next book to have three or four shorter stories in a six-issue arc that are not necessarily connected in an overall story. So, we might have a story featuring the team from the 18th century with Fanny Hill [from John Cleland's erotic novels of the 1700s], Natty Bumpo [a.k.a. Hawkeye, the star of The Last of the Mohicans] and all the rest of them. We might have one that deals with Prospero's group from the 17th century that we've referred to in the almanac text of Volume 2. But we may also have a story featuring Mina Murray and her new team, which

> **"I've made it very clear this is not a sabbatical. I'm leaving mainstream comics."**
>
> **ALAN MOORE**

the first one would probably be set in 1910 at the coronation of King George. The one after that would probably be set about 1915 with the conflict between the League and the Les Hommes Mystérieux, their French counterparts, which we've also referred to in the notes. So the next volume would only take us up to 1915. We could do the League of Extraordinary Gentleman forever though. We've talked about having a set of stories set in the 1950s. I'd like to see some that were set in the 1960s, the present day and the future. We have the whole of the fictional world to play with and all of its characters, and assuming that we can still skate neatly around the copyright laws.

Any interest to see the "League" film this summer?

No, but that's not to be taken as a criticism of the "League" movie or anyone involved with it. It's just that I'm not interested in movies. I have so much work to do, I won't have anytime to see movies. And like I say, this is a completely separate piece of work to my comic book just as "From Hell" was, which I still haven't seen. I wish them well with it. But it's not anything I'll be taking a great deal of interest in.

You've also talked about doing a project with Jim Lee

Yeah, I'm committed to doing that. But I can't really say much about it and I'm not really working on it at the moment. I haven't got it very well thought out just yet.

DC recently republished the bulk of your DC Universe superhero stories. Did seeing that in print make you want to do any mainstream superhero stuff again?

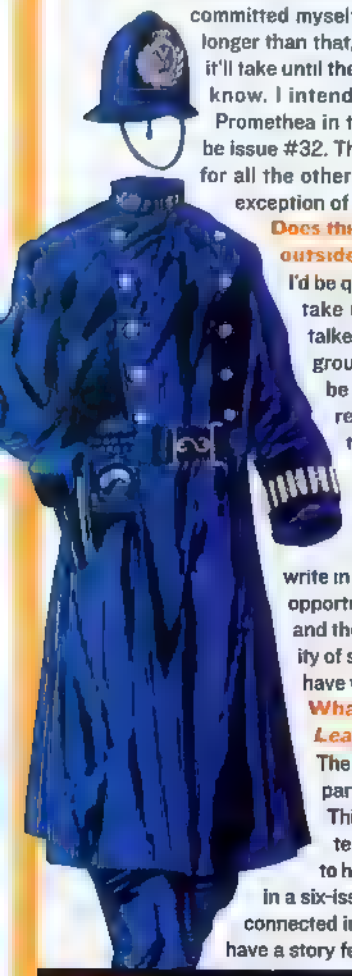
I look back on most of it fondly after reading it through again. I'd forgotten about most of it, but I love almost all of it. But beyond the *League of Extraordinary Gentleman*—that's it in terms of me and mainstream comic books. When I finish the commitments...well, who knows what's for the future? I could always change my mind. But as far as I can see at the present, it's not likely

What's going on with *Watchmen 2*?

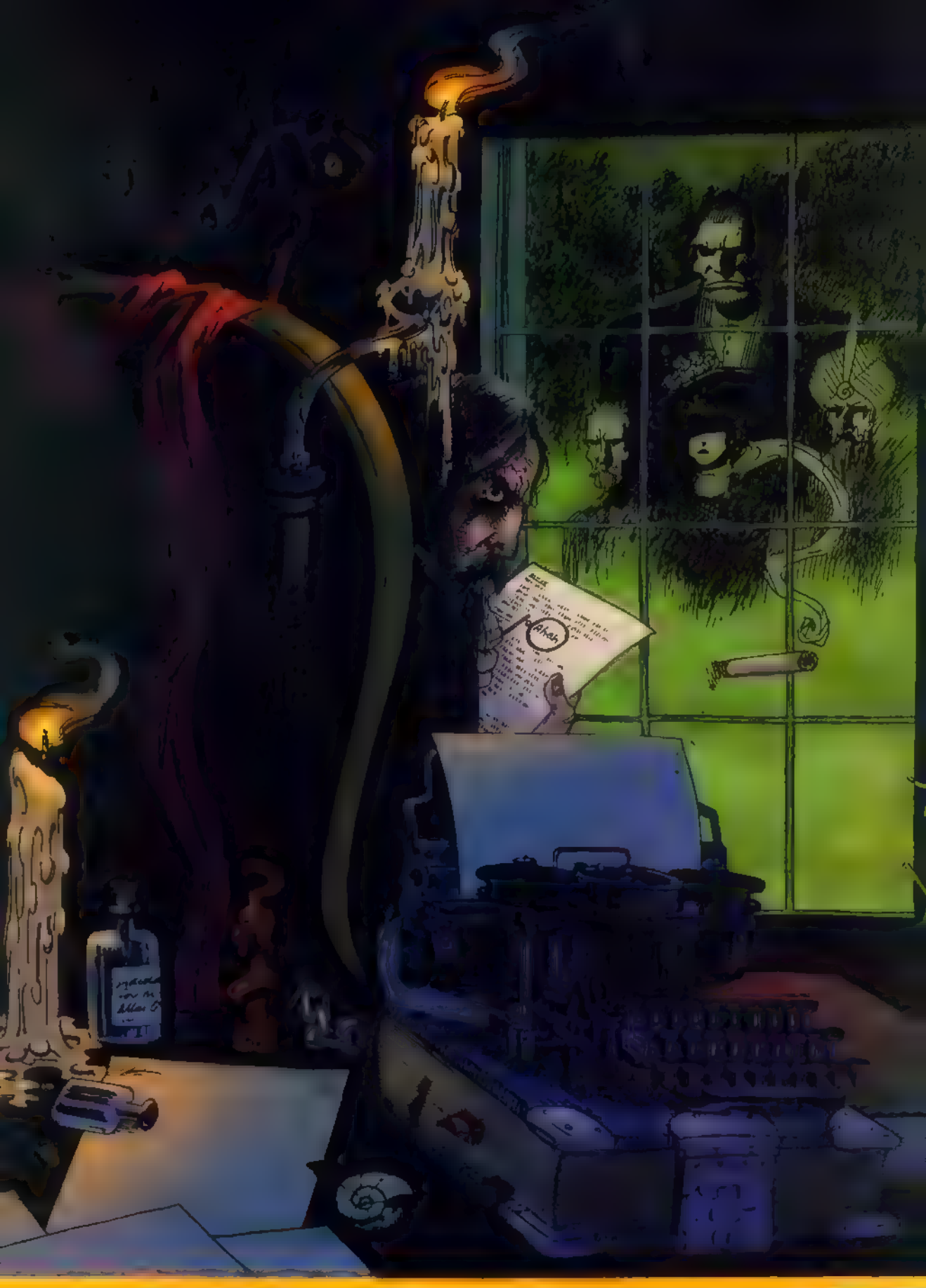
Excuse me?

Well, everyone always asks about *Watchmen 2* so I figured I'd move on.

That's very clever. [*Chuckles*] ■



FINE GENTS Invisible Man (above) may be dead, but Moore (opposite, seated) has plans for more League tales in the future.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A WIZARD zero EXCLUSIVE!

SIX in the CITY

JOE QUESADA AND BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS UNLEASH SPIDER-MAN'S GREATEST FOES: THE ULTIMATE SINISTER SIX!

BY MIKE COTTON

Joe Quesada wants to prove one thing—as an artist, he's still got some lead left in his pencil.

And the Marvel editor-in-chief thought there was no better place to prove that fact than this historic *Wizard* #0 mega-event. After going over two years without drawing a sequential story, Marvel's top dog teams with writer Brian Michael Bendis (*Ultimate Spider-Man*) to bring fans an exclusive look at the new Ultimate mini-series, *The Six*.

"It was almost a Zen-like experience in its peacefulness," explains Quesada of drawing this exclusive seven-page prologue to the six-issue mini-series that sees the Ultimates and Ultimate Spider-Man team up against an Ultimate version of the Sinister Six. "Just sitting down and drawing was very peaceful. It was just me, my brain and my pencil. It was very, very cool."

According to Bendis, the September-shipping mini-series features Norman Osborn, Electro, Sandman, Kraven and Doc Ock—with one more villain yet to be revealed—and ties the entire Ultimate Universe together in ways no one's ever imagined.

"You'll notice that S.H.I.E.L.D. agents always come and take away whoever Spider-Man defeats," says Bendis. "When they break free, it's bad news. Spider-Man can barely beat *one* of these guys! He needs some major help and that's where the Ultimates come in."

When Bendis pitched the series, an excited Quesada immediately assigned artist Trevor Hairsine (*Captain America*) to pencil the series, but when it came to this original, exclusive introduction for *Wizard* #0, Quesada took the job himself.

"Since Bendis came to Marvel, we've always talked about doing something together and this was a perfect way to do it," gushes Quesada. "In fact, there's a ton of other Marvel writers I'm dying to work with before I'm done. This really lit a fire under me [to do more penciling]."

Of course, Quesada admits there's always a little bit of one-upsmanship that keeps him on his toes. Especially when the *Batman* team of writer Jeph Loeb and artist Jim Lee also contribute an exclusive, original story to *Wizard* #0 on page 48.

"I love Jim Lee's art and I'm a huge fan of Jeph Loeb's stuff. It's really an honor just to be in the same magazine with those guys," says Quesada. "But there is an element of competition with any artist—especially against an artist whose work comes out on a monthly basis. When *Wizard* asked I said, 'Wow, this is a great place to show everyone the old E-I-C's still got it.' There was even this perfect moment for a double-page spread and I decided to go the extra mile and really punch it home for *Wizard* #0."

Ready to check out your first taste of Bendis' new Ultimate mini-series and Quesada's first work in over two years? What are you waiting for? *The Six* begins on the next page!

ULTIMATE MARVEL TEAM-UP Spidey's gonna need a hand from the Ultimates if he hopes to take on the villainous Six.

Stan Lee presents:

ULTIMATE SIX

Brian Michael Bendis story

pencils Joe Quesada Danny Miki inks

Richard Isanove colors | Chris Eliopoulos letters | MacKenzie Cadenhead assistant editor | Nick Lowe assistant editor

C.B. Cebulski associate editor | Ralph Macchio editor | Joe Quesada editor in chief | Bill Jemas president & imaginator

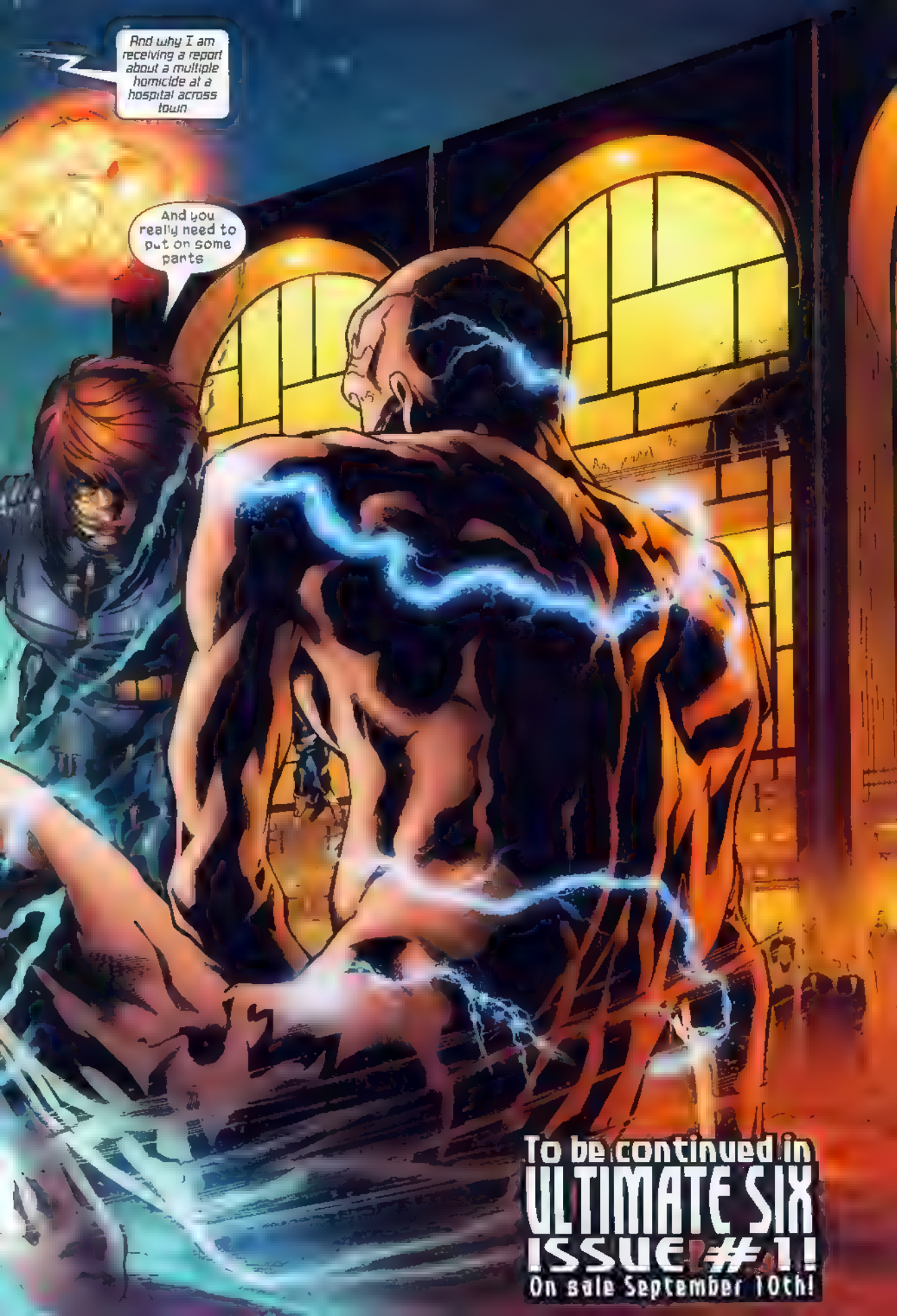
Ah. The hell happened to me?
What's your rush, buddy?
Uh-- What's going on?
Actually, that's my line.
I'm Special Agent Cobb. This is Special Agent Tucci. F.B.I.
I'm in an F.B.I. hospital?
Three weeks ago you were found unconscious in the basement of Fisk Towers
Seems you were in a bit of a coma
Cops say you had no identification on you.
Coma?
And being that you were found with no identification, and no record of employment with Wilson Fisk...
And no fingerprints..
Oh yeah, and no fingerprints...
Well, that alone wouldn't be enough to have two ace F.B.I. agents like ourselves stashed outside your hospital door for weeks waiting for you to wake up...
But, fact of the matter is, that Mr. Fisk has now officially been tagged a New York crime kingpin
On our Ten Most Wanted list...
So, who you are exactly, and what you were doing in his basement is very much a question the federal government would like answered.
Wilson Fisk?
Do you remember what happened to you?
What happened

THRUMP!
RUMMMBBLE
$%^*.
PSSPXXSCARAKLLE
$%^*'

Muther %^@$er!!
What we need to know is--
@%^@er!!
We're going to have to ask you to--
Quiet, I'm thinking.
POW!!

Great
Just great
They pinched the Kingpin?? That's what I get for putting all my eggs in one basket
So now not only do I have to start over from scratch aga n--
--but I gotta show my hoo-hah to the entire city of New York until I can find one of my containment suits
Kingpin took the fa l
Never in a mi on b l ion would I magine that kid in the spider t ghts wou d'a done it
I gotta ook into this
Now I gotta find a gig. I need some quick cash
Maybe hit a couple of jobs and then maybe lay low until I can f gure out what's what--
Can't believe I let that punk kid Spider-Man get one up on me
I swear to God I'm go ng to find out who that little pisher is and I m go ng to-- Aagghh
AAGGH!
Crap
AGH!
Crap
AGH!
THUMP
Excuse us

We'd like to talk to you about where you illegally obtained your powers


And why I am receiving a report about a multiple homicide at a hospital across town
And you really need to put on some pants
To be continued in
ULTIMATE SIX
ISSUE #1!
On sale September 10th!

HUSH

YOUR MOUTH

Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee sneak Catwoman into the Batcave for the first time in this exclusive short story set between 'Batman' #616 and #617

BY CASEY SEIJAS

While planning our *Wizard* #[illegible] issue, we had to pull out all the stops—and that meant inviting our extended family to join in the fun.

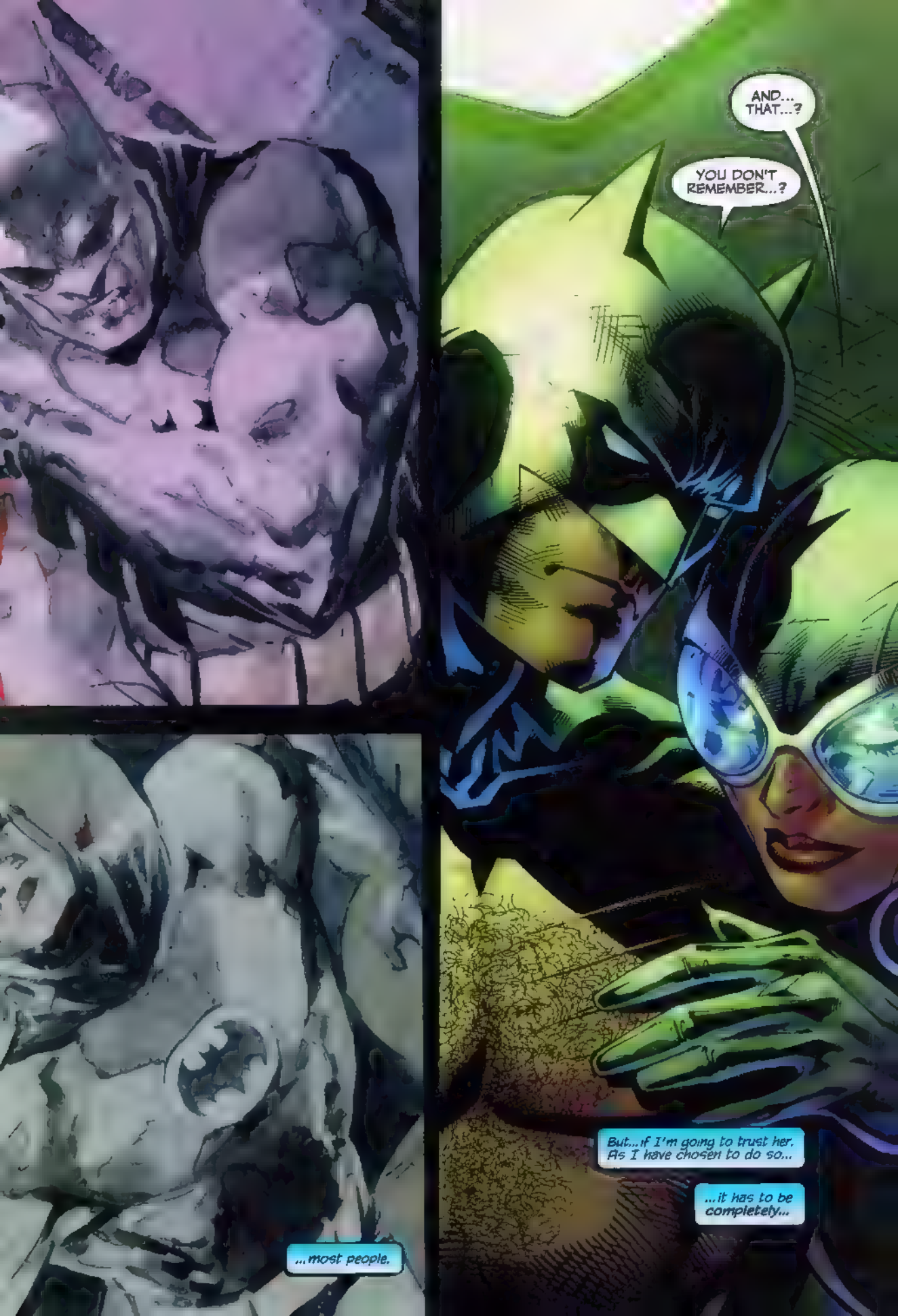
[illegible] about three years ago [illegible] Batman parodies. Jim [illegible] the part of the *Wizard* family and [illegible] [*Wizard* Publisher] Gareth [illegible] [my] very first San Diego Comic-Con [illegible] I would've been insulted if they had [illegible] the party! I'm happy that I'm back in the swing of things so that I can actually actively create again."

To help celebrate this milestone event in *Wizard* history, DC and the *Batman* creative [illegible] Jeph Loeb have offered us an [illegible] Batman story—and *Wizard* #0 is the [illegible] you can grab a copy for yourself! Serving as an interlude between #616 and #617, this very Made Alive, Batman [illegible] a quiet moment.

Dark Knight Detective

I have made a decision to bring Catwoman back to the cave.
WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?
I did not do this cavalierly. The cave... in so many ways... is my most private place.
AS SOON AS ALFRED IS DONE, THERE'LL BE WORK TO DO.
YES, BECAUSE TAKING TIME FOR THIS TO HEAL WOULD BE OUT OF THE QUESTION.
I BET YOU HAVE TO DO THIS PRETTY OFTEN ?
NO
CONSTANTLY.
I tell myself that her perspective on the case may shed some light where there otherwise is none.
OH, GOD
SOMETHING WRONG?
After all, cats can see in the dark.

I JUST...DIDN'T EXPECT...
... THE SCARS.
EACH OF THEM... CARRIES A MEMORY.
MOST PEOPLE OPT FOR A PHOTO ALBUM.
I am not...
HA HAHA HE HE HAHE
...nor will I ever be...
BLAM! BLAM!


AND... THAT...?
YOU DON'T REMEMBER...?
But... if I'm going to trust her. As I have chosen to do so...
...it has to be completely...
...most people.

WELL... NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT ..
YOU CAN'T IMAGINE HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS TO GET OUT OF THAT OLD COSTUME.
...OR MAYBE YOU CAN..
While my parents were still alive, I fell through a hole and tumbled down into the cave
SIR, IF I MAY, THOSE STITCHES WILL HARDLY...
WE'RE DONE
I'M NOT DONE
MISS. I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D --
Terrified, a dark world was opened to me, filled with bats and other horrible shadows.
WHY...?
TO MAKE IT ALL BETTER.
NOW, WE'RE DONE

I made a promise on the grave of my parents to rid this city of the evil that took their lives. By day, I am Bruce Wayne, billionaire philanthropist. At night, criminals, a cowardly and superstitious lot, call me...
But after tonight... the cave... seems a little less cold...
WE HAVE WORK TO DO.
BATMAN
CREATED BY BOB KANE
HUSH
Interlude
THE CAVE
Jeph LOEB writes
Jim LEE pencils
Scott WILLIAMS inks
Richard STARKINGS letters
Alex SINCLAIR colors
Bob SCHRECK edits
Michael WRIGHT assistant edits
special thanks to Mark CHIARELLO

SO MUCH PAIN..
WHY DOES HE KEEP DOING IT?
IT...IS DIFFICULT TO SAY.
DO YOU THINK HE'D TELL ME?
MISS KYLE. HIS TRUST IS NOT SOMETHING ONE CAN STEAL FROM A MUSEUM LATE AT NIGHT
CAREFUL, MISTER PENNYWORTH. I'VE SCRATCHED MEN'S EYES OUT FOR TAKING THAT TONE WITH ME
YES, I IMAGINE YOU HAVE
WHILE I HAVE SEWN HIS FLESH, SET HIS BONES, AND REMOVED MORE SPENT BULLETS FROM HIS BODY THAN I CARE TO REMEMBER...
...THERE IS ONE THING I WOULDN'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST CLUE HOW TO MEND.
NOW, YOU'VE PIQUED MY CURIOSITY
A BROKEN HEART.
I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TRULY EXTRAORDINARY IT IS FOR HIM TO SHARE HIS SECRETS WITH YOU.
INCLUDING HIS BRINGING YOU HERE TONIGHT.
YOU DON'T THINK MUCH OF ME, DO YOU?
QUITE THE CONTRARY. I THINK THE WORLD OF YOU.
AND WHILE HE MAY NOT SAY IT...
...SO DOES HE.
YOU BEGAN THIS EVENING ASKING WHAT YOU COULD DO TO HELP.
YOU ARE DOING IT, MISS KYLE. AND PLEASE CONTINUE TO DO SO.
MRRROW..
to be continued in Batman #617

SWINGING SUCCESS Fans eagerly await "Spider-Man 2" despite it being a year away.

CITY SWINGER

'Spider-Man 2' swoops back into the Big Apple, setting paparazzi abuzz as sparks fly in the Peter Parker/Mary Jane/John Jameson love triangle

■ BY MIKE COTTON ■

In a city that scoffs at celebrities, that considers itself so sophisticated and jaded that it's above star gazing—leaving the neck craning to tourists and country bumpkins—New York's found it can still be awestruck.

Residents rarely bat an eye as presidents come and go through their city, and movie sets popping up on the streets usually don't phase them, but tonight's different.

Just after 10 p.m. on a below-20-degree April evening, one person has whipped even New York's most stoic citizens into a frenzy, freezing the hustle and bustle of the most thriving metropolis in the world. There's a single name on every New Yorker's lips as they trek up and down the truck-and-camper-lined stretch of 31st Street a block north of Central Park.

"Spider-Man! Spider-Man!" chants a toddler, bouncing on his mother's knee as he points at a young man wearing an official Spider-Man hat passing the large picture window that lines Starbuck's Coffee. "Mommy, Mommy...Spider-Man."

"Oh my God, do you think Tobey Maguire's here?" screeches a teenage girl as she nudges a friend. The group feverishly searches the silver trailers that line the streets, as technicians and extras wearing "Spider-Man 2" set passes tromp back and forth.

Down the block, a group of five college students gather, hoping to catch the eye of Spider-Man's leading lady, Kirsten Dunst (a.k.a. Mary Jane Watson), or at least get a glimpse of the *Maxim* cover girl.

Closer to Central Park, an elderly couple paces up and down the sidewalk inspecting the brightly lit set inside the New York Planetarium, hoping for a look at the amazing high-flying antics they've seen captured by

WIRE WORK A Spider-Man stunt double spins a web way up high in New York City.

the daily tabloids since "Spider-Man 2" began shooting in NYC more than a year prior to its July 2, 2004 release. And even though Maguire (who plays Spider-Man/Peter Parker) won't be in costume on set this night—instead donning a dark suit and camera for a more dramatic scene with Dunst—the elderly couple continues to wait hours for even a glimpse of a stunt man in Spidey's now world-famous colors.

After a 14-month absence, Spider-Man's returned to New York, and New York's happy to have him back.

STORY SECRETS

Director Sam Raimi's also ecstatic about a return to the city that never sleeps.

Walking around the new set at the Planetarium, the director scans every detail, from the placement of tables and chairs to the costumes of each and every extra. He inspects his newest set for any fault and finds none. And why would there be even the hint of a problem? This is what Raimi's been preparing over a year for.

"This is a moment when Peter Parker is on assignment for the *Daily Bugle* and he runs into Mary Jane Watson," explains Raimi as he goes over notes with a production assistant for the following scene, in which Peter and Mary Jane trade verbal jabs during a spring gala event. "And it deals with a point in their developing relationship...their love story. And it's really a pivotal scene having to do with where the relationship is at this point in the story."

When the first "Spider-Man" film opened on May 3, 2002, the Wall-crawler became an instant worldwide phenomenon, with fans racing to see the film again and again, buying millions of dollars worth of Spider-Man merchandise and rocketing the character to heights even his trademark webs couldn't take him. In just a matter of weeks, the film became the biggest multimedia event since the original "Star Wars" trilogy, and fans were rabid for more as "Spider-Man" grew to become the fifth highest-grossing film of all time—nearly $1 billion worldwide.

Before the first film even departed theaters, fans were begging for a sequel featuring more of the unusual love triangle between Spider-Man, his alter ego Peter Parker and girl next door Mary Jane Watson. And fans cheered for a follow-up to the final scene of the first film, when Mary Jane finally reveals her love to Peter only to have the youthful hero rebuff her, knowing that anyone he loves is in constant danger because of his superhero alter ego. But if Peter and MJ work out their differences in this film, it's not going to be during tonight's shoot. Now a successful Broadway actor, MJ will reportedly get engaged to astronaut John Jameson, son of *Daily Bugle* Publisher J. Jonah Jameson, in the film.

"This film's really the continuation of Peter Parker's life, and at the end of the last picture, he made the choice to strike out on the road to responsibility. And this movie is that journey of responsibility," Raimi explains of the top-secret sequel. "And maybe it's a harder journey than he ever anticipated. At times it will overwhelm him and at times he will overcome it. But I can say that in part two he encounters Doc Ock—Doctor Octavius, played by Alfred Molina. Peter Parker and the good doctor have a relationship and once Doc Ock becomes the villain, Spider-Man will have a different relationship with him."

But if you want more story details, they won't spill from the always-suit-clad filmmaker or his set.

"I want to have the story told to the audience as they watch the film," admits Raimi. "Ideally, I don't want it told to the audience in little bits and snatches of television clips and Internet stories. It's everyone's right to talk about anything they want to. But I want to be the one who tells the story."

Raimi's already laid the groundwork for the second film with a number of continuing subplots, the most volatile of which includes Harry Osborn's ongoing hatred of Spider-Man after the younger Osborn (James Franco) believed that Spider-Man had killed his father, Norman Osborn (Willem Dafoe, who won't return for the sequel).

With Raimi excited about the prospect of doing another huge film, the first job was to draft a script from the director's copious notes on his vision of the sequel.

With a bigger budget and 18 months of lead time, Raimi, Sony and Marvel Studios tapped David Koepp, who wrote the first "Spider-Man" installment, to work on the initial draft of the sequel, then had Alvin Sargent ("Unfaithful") pen a second draft. "Smallville" creators Miles Millar and Alfred Gough also worked on the screenplay before Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Chabon (*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*) finished off the final script.

By the time the script was completed, fans were already speculating about the next villain, with everyone from The Lizard to Carnage to the Hobgoblin being rumored to take on New York's favorite hero. Raimi and company eventually chose Spider-Man's eight-armed foe, Doctor Otto Octavius—Dr. Octopus—a scientist who develops mechanical octopus-like arms before going insane and taking on the Web-head. Of course, deciding on a villain was only half of Raimi's problem, as he also had to find an actor who could

ANIMATED ARACHNID

Before "Spider-Man 2" hits the big screen, MTV plans to bring the Web-head to the small screen for hardcore fans.

With a launch date set for July 11, at 10 p.m., a new "Spider-Man" animated series—featuring the voices of Neil Patrick Harris (Peter/Spider-Man), Lisa Loeb (Mary Jane), Ian Ziering (Harry), Rob Zombie (The Lizard) and Michael Clarke Duncan (The Kingpin)—will fill in the gaps between the two films. With a mix of top-notch computer generated and classic animation, the series will soar even higher than the films, according to Executive Producer and main writer Morgan Gendel.

"It just looks outrageous," extols Gendel. "I knew going into it that we could make the action look great. What's stunning to me is the acting of the characters. If Peter Parker, MJ and Harry are having a conversation, they really emote! The way they roll their shoulders and shrug their eyes; it's quite good."

The new series, aimed at the older teen and young adult audience of MTV, will be edgier, funnier and a little racier than the first "Spider-Man" film, according to Gendel, who says the series will be a perfect bridge between the first and second movies.

"I'd say the humor comes more from the predicaments and the relationship things: there's some pretty funny conversations between him and Harry, and Harry and MJ, about relationships, and Spider-Man very often gets himself into a predicament," explains Gendel.

Of course, a lot of the new series will center on action between Spider-Man and some of his most well known villains, including the Lizard and Black Cat, but the creative team for the series has also decided to create new villains for the Web-head's animated adventures.

"We're creating almost all-new villains," says Gendel. "We used our share of Marvel villains—Kingpin, Kraven the Hunter, Electro, but then we created some really cool new characters. It made it fresh to create whole new characters [illegible]"

adeptly go toe to toe with Maguire, much like Dafoe ("Platoon") did in the first film.

Bob Hoskins ("Who Framed Roger Rabbit?"), Philip Seymour Hoffman ("Almost Famous") and Vincent D'Onofrio ("Law and Order: Criminal Intent") were all reportedly considered for the part, but Molina ("Identity") won the role after numerous meetings with the production team and a screen test with Maguire.

"Alfred Molina is simply a great actor," gushes Raimi. "I needed someone who could believably pull off creating a character who could interact with Peter Parker in interesting ways. Really, it was just his great acting skill that made him a very good candidate."

And then there were the computer-generated effects Raimi relied on so heavily in the first film. With films such as "The Matrix: Reloaded" taking CGI to new heights of achievement, Raimi needed months to test effects, have the cast's images scanned in what was reportedly full-day events, and design exactly what Doc Ock's trademark arms would look like before shooting ever began.

"Every day there are such giant leaps in technology and we're obviously going to take advantage of them," Executive Producer and Marvel Studios President Avi Arad says, lighting a cigar as he takes a seat next to Raimi. "Just close your eyes and think of Doc Ock and ask yourself what can one do with that; it complements Spidey and it complements Peter. That's what makes a great villain."

STRESS RELIEF

Forced to shoot around the Planetarium's schedule and well behind his planned start time, Raimi's getting antsy. Pacing back and forth around the set, the director's still waiting for final preparation to be made as he lights a cigarette and takes a drag—it's obvious that the worst part of Raimi's day is the waiting.

"Does anyone have any aspirin?" asks the director. "Anyone? I just need two of them, please."

As Raimi leans back in his chair, he watches the open area in front of him slowly transformed into the Benefit Gala for the Science Library of New York. Set hands decorate tables with platters full of fake hors d'oeuvres, blue cobalt glasses and fine china, as the crew tries to ensure that none of the props will be blown away by the gusting, chilly winds. The weary director rubs his temples and closes his eyes.

In addition to the pressure of topping the first film, Raimi almost had to deal with doing it without his leading man. Published reports indicate Maguire nearly didn't return for the sequel. According to sources close to the production and an *L.A. Times* article, Maguire developed back problems during the first film, which he irritated while playing a jockey in Universal's "Seabiscuit." Those back problems became a source of contention, with Maguire reportedly missing important effects scans that almost led to the young actor dropping out of the role or being dropped by Sony, depending on who you talk to. Arad even admits that Dunst's current boyfriend, Jake Gyllenhaal ("Donnie Darko"), was spoken to about taking over the Spider-Man role. But Maguire was finally able to return, and Raimi's happy to have him back

Maguire, along with Dunst, arrives on set at 10:30 p.m. to overwhelming applause, and Raimi is right there greeting each of his stars.

"It's colder tonight, isn't it?" says Maguire, who was in costume until 5:30 a.m. the night before atop the observatory, in a scene which will eventually lead to his arrival at the gala.

Raimi smiles as he moves closer to one of the eight metal

MAY DAY Spidey and Aunt May check out the sights after Spidey swings her to safety.

MYSTERY MACHINES

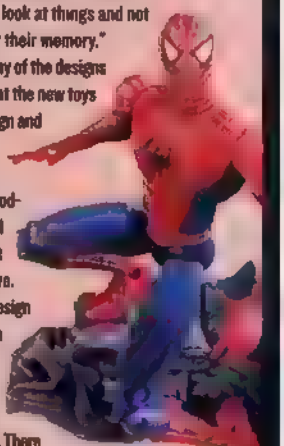
If you want to know what the "Spider-Man 2" toys will look like, don't ask the people making them.

Planned for a spring 2004 ship date to coincide with the release of "Spider-Man 2" on July 2, 2004, the concepts for Doctor Octopus, the new film's villain, and other characters are so top secret that even Toy Biz can't confirm what the good doctor will look like in the film.

"Very little work's been done on the 'Spider-Man 2' toys, because everything is very early in the development process, so we have very limited access to concepts and storyboards," explains Marketing Manager for Toy Biz, Patricia Rinaldi. "If the toy designers did see anything, they did it in their travels to Los Angeles a few months back to take a look at whatever information could be revealed. Everything is so under wraps that they had to fly out to L.A. just to look at things and not take anything back with them except their memory."

Although Toy Biz can't disclose any of the designs for the new toys, Rinaldi did reveal that the new toys will be an evolutionary leap in toy design and variety that will offer fans six-inch figures like they've never seen before.

"It will be a lot wider variety of product," says Rinaldi. "Of course there will be action figures, but even within that category we will be tons more creative. Even within the last couple years, our design team has been continually improving on their ideas and the execution of their product. You are going to see some product here that has never been done before. I can't wait for everyone to see it. There will be lots of super new stuff, totally taking what we did the first time around to a completely new level." ■ **MC AND JUSTIN ACLIN**



tiki lamps that heats the set off-camera to keep extras and Producer Lauren Ziskin warm. Heating his hands and face, the 43-year-old director notices the excitement that should surround an outdoor, springtime gala is ebbing due to the extreme cold. As extras in evening gowns and light suits flock to the warmth, Raimi decides it's time to stop everything.

"Hold on, hold on," exclaims the director, looking through the camera as he waves at the freezing extras and cast.

"Let's all just calm down," he continues with a smile and a chuckle. "It's just a movie, right? We're doing fine."

LOVE TRIANGLE

After a lengthy rehearsal, Maguire puffs on a cigar alongside Arad, while Dunst warms herself under a blanket with a hot water bottle pressed against her stomach. Filming is finally ready to begin.

As final props of glassware and fake food are displayed on set, filming gets underway—and sparks fly between Maguire's Peter Parker and Dunst's Mary Jane.

"Hi, I'm sorry...listen, there was a disturbance..." explains Parker after showing up hours late for the gala and missing Mary Jane's Broadway performance, the latest in a string of broken promises.

"I don't know you," retorts Mary Jane with a glare. "I can't think about you anymore. It's too painful."

"I've been reading a lot of poetry..." interjects Parker, trying to soothe his one-time love.

"Whatever that means..." interrupts MJ.

"Day by day..." begins Peter, quoting Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, before being cut off again.

"Stop it, Peter."

"Can I get you a drink?" asks Peter softly, his doe eyes watching for her reaction.

"I'm with John," says MJ, pointing at Jameson, dressed in his Air Force uniform. "He'll get it. You've lost the right to fetch me a drink. John's seen my play five times. May's seen it. Harry's seen it twice. My sick mother got out of bed to see me. Even my father came backstage.

"And my best friend, who cares so much about me, can't make an 8 o'clock curtain call—you're nothing more to me than an empty suit," says MJ before walking away in a huff.

Raimi watches intently as Maguire stares at the camera around his neck before grabbing a glass of wine off a passing tray, and then looks up into the camera.

"Was that good?" asks the actor, as he fidgets with the camera. "Should I have gone longer on the poem?"

"No. No, that was good," smiles Raimi. "Just keep going until she cuts you off. But we need to break soon."

With that, Raimi retreats inside, watching the playback, checking with the sound engineers and even running through the finer points of the scene with Maguire, who's lit another cigar, and Dunst, back again in full blanket-wrap-mode.

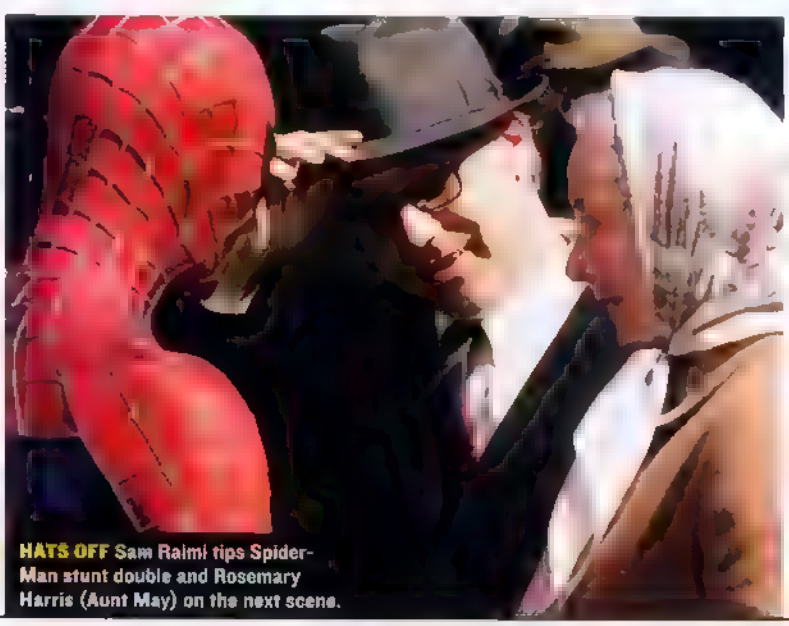
Before long, it's well past midnight, and after shooting the scene four more times, the crew's ready for a break—Raimi finally gives in, although everyone knows he'd love to have one more take.

"That's it," shouts Raimi's assistant director. "That's lunch."

But long after everyone else is retreating, Raimi's still on set, looking for any mistakes, reading through the scene and watching the final shot of the scene, knowing one thing:

"Everything needs to be perfect," murmurs the director. "*Everything.*"

Staff Writer Mike Cotton welcomes fame, but he's ignored...mace and restraining orders are his reward...look out! There goes the Cotton man!



HATS OFF Sam Raimi tips Spider-Man stunt double and Rosemary Harris (Aunt May) on the next scene.

KEVIN SMITH

The director/comic writer speaks candidly about missing the 'Target,' his cult following and the J.Lo/Ben wedding

BY RICHARD HO

WIZARD: It's been a while since you've written a comic, but you're still one of the largest draws at conventions. Why do feel your fanbase is so devoted?

SMITH: I don't know! I wish I could figure it out and keep doing it. I guess there are a lot of folks who are just into the comics that I've written—and from those, they've jumped head-first into a far deeper comics pool.

Would you categorize it as a cult? We've seen people dressed exactly like you.

That is kind of weird! When I went to San Diego Comic Con last summer, I've never seen so many people dressed like me before. It's really kind of sad! I mean, my look is pretty easy to pull off, it's just "fat guy with beard," and you're pretty much halfway there

"It's totally my fault. I should have just let Bendis handle Bullseye the way he originally wanted to."

SMITH, ON *THE TARGET'S* LONG DELAY

What do fans ask you at conventions these days? Do they focus on your past work, or books like *Spider-Man: Black Cat* or *Daredevil: Target* that haven't wrapped yet?

[*Laughs*] Lately, it's been questions about those books. I just turned in issue #2 of *Daredevil: Target*, which Adam Kubert is drawing. As soon as I finish *Target*, I'll finish *Spider-Man/Black Cat*, which has kept fans in one long-ass cliffhanger! But I can't blame anybody else but myself for being as late as I've been

Is that because you've been so busy with movies?

Yeah, it was just really bad timing. I was on a nice roll with *Spider-Man/Black Cat*, and then "Jersey Girl" just kind of took over my life. Some people speculated that Marvel had a problem with the scripts for *Spider-Man/Black Cat* #4 and #5, and that's why it's been so late. The only problem Marvel's had with the scripts for #4 and #5 is that they've not yet been written!

You were once slated to take over *Amazing Spider-Man*. Is that still in the cards?

No. [Marvel Editor-In-Chief] Joe Quesada came to the set of "Jersey Girl" one day and we talked about it. When it was apparent that I was going to be late on *Spider-Man/Black Cat*, we both decided that, as much as I would love to do this, I'm the wrong guy. I just can't stay on schedule right now, and it would be irresponsible to take on the flagship title and be late on it

So, now you're Mr. Mini-Series?

Probably. Or jumping onto books for very specific arcs. [DC editor] Bob Schreck asked me if I wanted to play with Batman for a year, but I wouldn't do it unless all the scripts are done ahead of time. One of the things I most regret about being so late on *Daredevil: Target* is letting Joe and [current *Daredevil* writer] Brian Michael Bendis down when it came to Bullseye. Bendis was originally going to use Bullseye [in a story last year], but the appearance got pushed all the way back to the current storyarc because of [Marvel's promise to] me. At some point, Joe had to say, "Listen, Brian has an arc that features the Bullseye that you were supposed to establish in *Target*. We have to let it go forward." So now it'll be very disjointed. You're going to be seeing a Bullseye that was supposed to be set up in *Target*, and it's totally my fault! I should have just let Bendis handle Bullseye the way he originally wanted to in his storyline, rather than sticking to a promise that Marvel made eons ago

What do you think of Bendis' *Daredevil*?

I quite like it. And I *really* like his *Ultimate Spider-Man*. Both of those books are like, as soon as you get home, you read 'em. Other stuff you can kind of let wait, but those books I can't wait to pick up, because it's always such a crisp and enjoyable read. I haven't been disappointed yet.

Rumor has it that your *Daredevil* arc might actually be the plot for the second film.

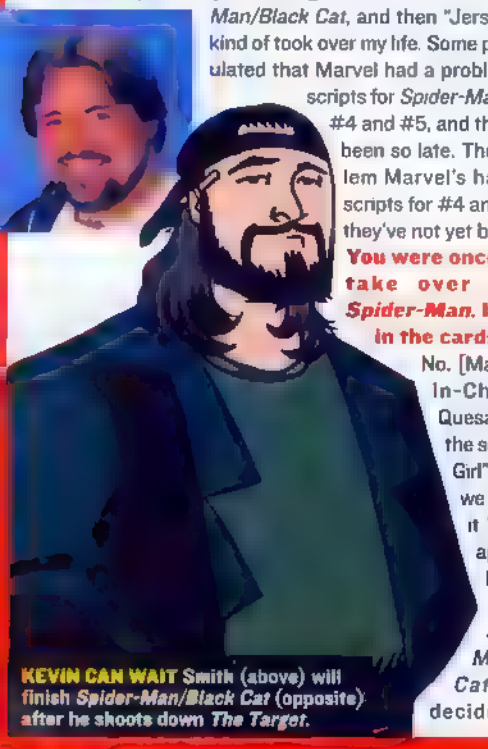
Both Ben [Affleck] and [director] Mark [Steven Johnson] have asked me about writing the next one. I don't know. It'd be one thing if I only had to please Ben and Mark, but you have to deal with Marvel, Regency and Fox. I'd rather just kick back and watch somebody else try to make sense of my stuff

So have you gotten your secret invite to Ben and J.Lo's wedding yet?

A verbal one, yeah

What are you getting them for a wedding gift?

Most people you can get away with writing a check, right? Not these guys. I kind of shot my wad when I gave them a custom-made arcade video game after "Jersey Girl" wrapped. I don't know where you go from there. I'd have to cast their likenesses in bronze or something ridiculous like that. ■



KEVIN CAN WAIT Smith (above) will finish *Spider-Man/Black Cat* (opposite) after he shoots down *The Target*.

THERY
RACHEL

My JLA/AVE

FIRST BLOOD "When the JLA and Avengers meet for the first time, Thor cracks Superman with his hammer in a scene that's going to be huge!"

ENGERS Diary

By GEORGE PÉREZ
(as told to Mike Cotton)

Comics' ultimate crossover has been 20 years in the making, and with the project debuting in September, the artist details the challenges, the exhilaration and how he almost called it quits

I've waited my entire life for one day — the day JLA/Avengers became reality.

Sure, for the last two years, I've been drawing the *JLA/Avengers* match-up pitting the classic superteams from rival publishers DC and Marvel Comics. And after pushing for 20 years, a handful of false starts, scuttled plans and mini-steps, I wasn't sure if *JLA/Avengers* was ever going to see the light of day.

Back in 1983 we came close. I actually drew 21 pages of a *JLA/Avengers* one-shot, but company politics and editorial wrangling torpedoed the project before I ever put pencil to paper.

on page 22.

And, of course, there were always rumors. A comic convention never went by when someone didn't ask me, "When are you going to do *JLA/Avengers*?" Over the years, the project took on mythical proportions with expectations and speculation rising with each passing year. And if it were up to me, I would've done it in a second. But when you're dealing with the two biggest publishers in comics (and some of the biggest egos to boot), nothing's easy.

But today, June 27, 2003, as I finish off the inks (did I mention, I'm penciling and inking the entire series?) on issue #3, I can hardly believe *JLA/Avengers* is almost complete.

This is my diary from the first time I seriously began talking to Marvel and DC about the updated version of the crossover. Everything from the first phone calls in 1999 to today as I review the colors on the Batman/Captain America fight. If you think you know everything there is to know about the new *JLA/Avengers*, think again.

FALSE START

JAN. 10, 1999—I've been approached on and off over the years about a *JLA/Avengers* project. But now that both *JLA*, with Grant Morrison and Howard Porter, is successful, and *Avengers* is successful under Kurt Busiek and myself, it looks like we might get a shot at actually doing the series. Kurt and [*Avengers* Editor] Tom Brevoort believe it's a perfect time. Now that these two books are hot, why don't we start negotiating it? Everyone is a little concerned that I won't have time to draw the regular *Avengers* series and the crossover, so we decide it will just take place in both regular series and I'll draw the *Avengers* half with Howard drawing the *JLA* half. It's a terrible monster to coordinate, though.

APRIL 15, 2000—Thankfully, Marvel and DC have ceased negotiations. No one wants to do this series more than I do, but I don't think Grant really had any enthusiasm to do a crossover book like this. I'd rather draw the entire thing myself. This is my baby and I don't want anyone else breast feeding her.

AUG. 5, 2000—Now that Mark Waid's been tapped to write *JLA*, there's been talk of working out another crossover with Mark and Kurt co-writing it. But this time, I'll draw the entire series. I'm keeping my fingers crossed!

AUG. 28, 2000—I finish my last issue of *Avengers* today. I'd hoped to be working on *JLA/Avengers* by now, but who knows when that will happen.

SEPT. 3, 2000—Joe Quesada took over as editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics a few days ago. I am a little disappointed when I call to congratulate him and he tells me that he isn't interested in doing any more crossovers with DC. Joe feels that the novelty of inter-company crossovers has been diluted by the recent glut of such projects. I can't really disagree. Even I wrote one, the *Silver Surfer/Superman* crossover in 1997! Joe doesn't dash all of my hopes though. According to him, there's one crossover he'd do—*JLA/Avengers*. He also says that the project's mine if he can get it approved. He says he'll keep me informed. I won't hold my breath.

OCT. 5, 2000—I just started doing *CrossGen Chronicles* and [CrossGen President] Mark Alessi calls me today to ask if I'd be interested in working for his company full time. I'm seriously considering his offer, but with *JLA/Avengers* being talked about again, I'm not sure if I want to lock myself down in an exclusive contract with CrossGen even though it's very enticing.

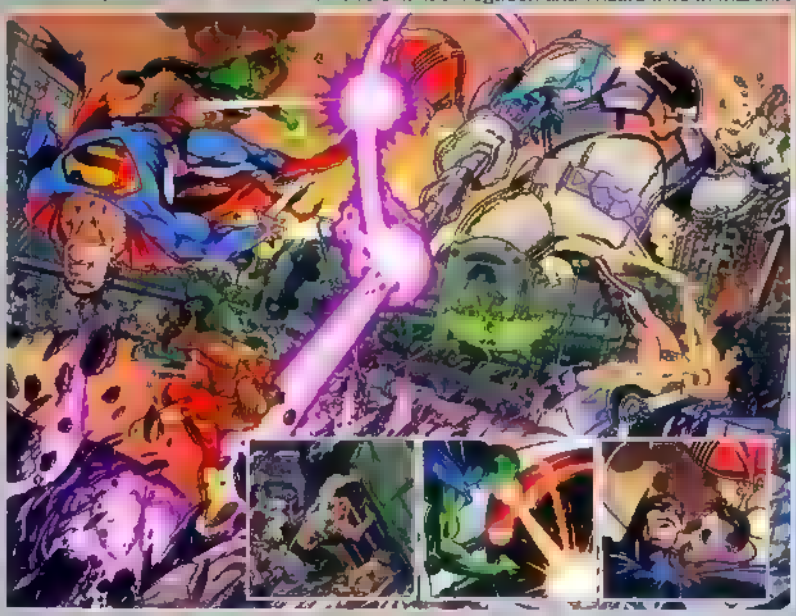
OCT. 18, 2000—Both DC and Marvel have now expressed interest in having me pencil *JLA/Avengers*, but no one's even started talking about contracts yet. Also, Mark [Waid] just signed an exclusive with CrossGen, so Kurt would have to write it solo. I wonder if this is just going to turn into another debacle.

NOV. 22, 2000—I've informed Marvel and DC that if I don't receive a written agreement by Dec. 15, I'll sign an exclusive contract with CrossGen and won't be able to work on *JLA/Avengers* for at least two years.

SO TIME

DEC. 15, 2000—I finally receive the contract for *JLA/Avengers*, and I inform Mark Alessi I will go exclusive with CrossGen as of October 2002.

JAN. 17, 2001—While Kurt, Tom and Dan [Raspler, *JLA* editor] work on a plot, I work on the first promo art for a joint announcement at March's Orlando MegaCon and *Wizard* #116 in March. I



SPREAD 'EM "As I draw these spreads for promotion in *Wizard*, I'm doing research like crazy. I literally couldn't remember what Terminus looked like!"

can hardly believe I'm being paid for an actual piece of artwork for *JLA/Avengers*. This isn't a fan commission—this is the real deal!

—By the time we all get together in Orlando to announce the project, everyone was already talking about it. I guess a project this big can't be kept under wraps for too long. And since Marvel and DC already announced they'd be co-hosting a panel, most fans and pros have already put two and two together.

It eases my mind a little bit now that everyone knows *JLA/Avengers* is a go again. Now that DC and Marvel have put their collective reputations on the line, I don't see anything holding this project back anymore.

—As expected, the plot is taking a long time to be approved. I'm already receiving pieces, but I can't get a real feel for the story without everything. I like what I see so far, though.

— *Wizard* wants to run the first art from *JLA/Avengers*, so I'm jumping ahead in my work to push through the pencils and inks on the first two double-page spreads. I can't wait for fans to get a look at this stuff. So far, I haven't drawn any pages of the JLA and Avengers interacting, so we pick out pages of the JLA fighting a major Marvel villain (Terminus) and the Avengers taking on a major DC villain (Starro).

—There's so many characters in this series, I'm doing research like crazy. I literally couldn't remember what Terminus looked like today!

—Marvel and DC have a very different vision of what the coloring on *JLA/Avengers* should look from mine and [colorist] Tom Smith's. I feel bad that Tom's caught in the middle.

—I am growing increasingly annoyed with the coloring on the two spreads we're sending *Wizard* for their "First Look." When I voice my displeasure to Tom [Brevoort] and Dan, both decide that Tom Smith and myself are more than welcome to make any grievances public. I guess no one wants to be the person who has to go to their bosses and say, "I'm the one responsible for George Pérez quitting this book."

—I just finished page #21 of the first issue. As I wrote "*JLA/Avengers* issue #1, page #22" on the next art board, I realized this is further than this project has ever gone before. I called Tom Brevoort immediately to celebrate. This is a landmark day!

—The plots are slowing down and I don't think it's Kurt's fault. [DC Editor] Dan Raspler doesn't want to approve anything until he gets a complete plot. I'm getting annoyed. He seems to be very indecisive and that's something we can't allow with a project this big.

—Since a holdup in plot approval doesn't allow me to continue penciling, I start to ink what I've already penciled for issue #1. I want this project to be "all George Pérez," a complete representation of my art.

—Now that issue #1 is penciled and I'm halfway through penciling issue #2, DC's business department wants to have a firm date when *JLA/Avengers* will ship, but that's impossible at this point. There's no way this book should have a ship date until we know it can ship. I tell Marvel and DC that I'll walk away from this project if they don't hold to their word when they said, "*JLA/Avengers* will ship when *JLA/Avengers* is ready to ship."

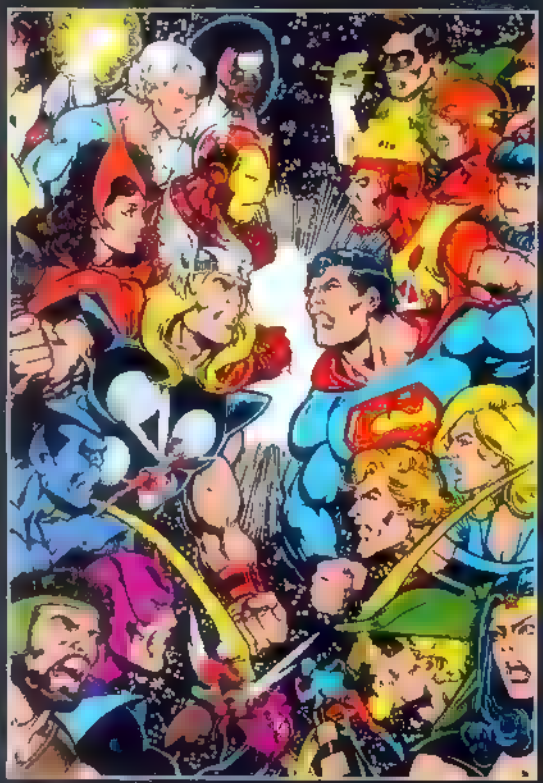
—I work on the first meeting between the JLA and Avengers today, and Thor cracks Superman with his hammer in a scene that's going to be huge! I would expect no less from Kurt.

—As I'm inking the last pages of issue #1, I learn I'm going to have to go back and redraw Green Lantern's costume. DC recently updated his look and it'll need to be reflected. After speaking with everyone involved, we agree that this will be the last costume change we make. If costumes or characters change from

FIGHT CLUB "As I draw the Captain America/Batman fight, I know this will make fanboys crazy!"

FIRST THINGS FIRST...

What happened with the 1983 JLA/Avengers crossover?



In the early 1980s, it looked like nothing could stop a *JLA/Avengers* crossover—nothing but Marvel and DC Comics.

Following up on a very successful string of crossovers like 1976's *Superman vs. Spider-Man* and 1982's *X-Men/New Teen Titans*, Marvel and DC agreed to a JLA/Avengers one-shot crossover.

Gerry Conway plotted the story and George Pérez was assigned to pencil it, but before long, problems began to surface that would eventually torpedo the project. Conway's initial plot, which reportedly revolved around time travel and set the JLA/Avengers up in a *Contest of Champions*-style competition, took almost two years to complete.

By February of 1983 though, Marvel Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter was finally able to review a plot—he refused it flatly, claiming the story made no sense.

Everyone agreed that a revised plot was needed. Unfortunately, no one told that to Pérez, who began drawing the rejected plot.

"It was excruciatingly annoying," says Pérez today, the only person to work on both the original one-shot and the current four-issue crossover shipping in September. "I drew 21 pages before I got the call to stop penciling immediately."

Eventually writer Roy Thomas re-scripted the initial plot but the infighting between Marvel and DC's editorial teams put the project in jeopardy.

Everyone from Pérez to Thomas to Shooter did interviews about the project's continued delays and by May of 1984 both publishers officially scuttled the one-shot. ■ MC

now on, they won't be reflected in the crossover

—With the pencils on issue #2 almost complete, I make preparations to take a brief vacation to France with my wife this September. I look forward to taking some time off.

—As my wife and I prepare to go to the airport we hear the news about the World Trade Center disaster. I can't believe any of this. We cancel our trip.

THE WORST PART?

—Looking over my bank records, I realize I'm losing about 30 percent of my income now that I'm only working on *JLA/Avengers*. I'm very worried about bankruptcy. I've called my art dealer and he's set me up doing some commission pieces to help out.

—The plans for my new CrossGen book *Solus* haven't been finalized yet, so I've got a one-month reprieve to work on *JLA/Avengers*. Plot approval remains slow. I'm at a standstill on issue #3 pencils, and I continue inking issue #2.

—I draw the Batman versus Captain America fight today. This one will make the fanboys go crazy!

—My CrossGen contract has gone back into effect. From now on, I'll only work on *JLA/Avengers* at night and on weekends. I'm still penciling and inking issue #3. I'm jazzed to be working on *Solus* with Barbara Kesel, but I wish I had a little more time to devote to *JLA/Avengers*.

—I can't ever recall working longer days. I work on *JLA/Avengers* off the clock constantly. Even when I sit down to watch TV with my wife these days, I find myself bringing a board and pen with me to finish the inks on issue #3.

—We're in the home stretch. Although the final plot is still being worked on, I begin penciling the first third of *JLA/Avengers* #4. We decide to solicit the project for September—the first issue debuting Sept. 3—and I'm confident we can meet that deadline, but it's still going to be tight. We may have to go to a six week shipping schedule, but I'm sure each issue will be worth the wait.

Now that we're less than three months away from shipping issue #1, I've finally got some breathing room. Although most of my week is taken up working on *Solus*, the pencils on *JLA/Avengers* #4 are coming along nicely and the inks on issue #3 are almost done.

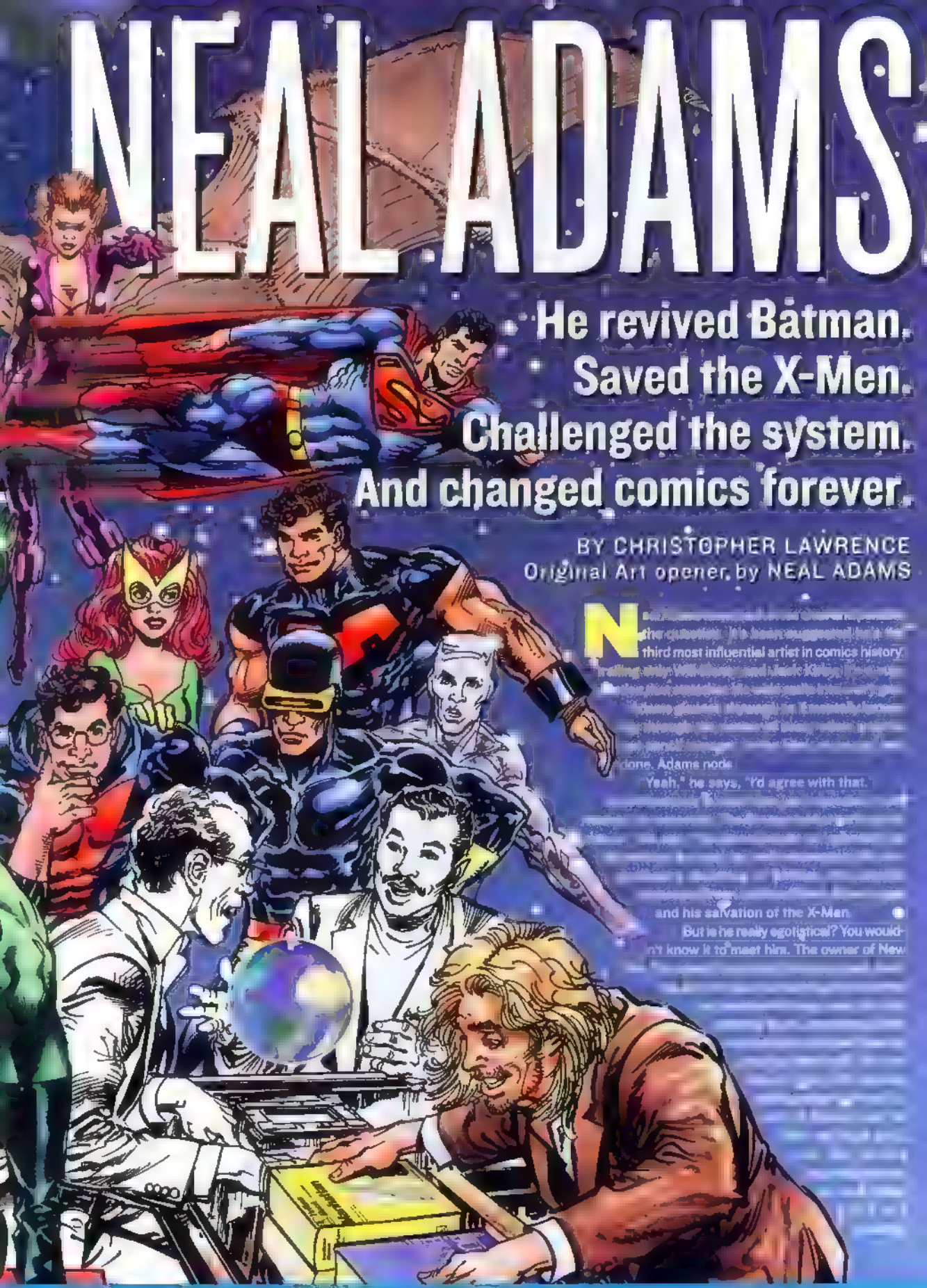
Looking back, this has been one of the most enjoyable and creative experiences in my 30-year career. People ask me how I feel, and I tell them to get back to me Sept. 3. I'll [illegible] (W)

Florida-based writer/artist George Pérez has been drawing comics steadily since 1974, gaining a rep for ultra-detailed artwork. He achieved superstardom in the 1980s reviving DC's New Teen Titans *and drawing* Crisis on Infinite Earths *(both with writer Marv Wolfman). In the '90s he illustrated a popular* Avengers *reboot, which led to his dream job,* JLA/Avengers.

NEAL ADAMS

He revived Batman. Saved the X-Men. Challenged the system. And changed comics forever.

BY CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE
Original Art opener by NEAL ADAMS



N

the questions is his [illegible] third most influential artist in comics history

[illegible]done. Adams nods.

"Yeah," he says, "I'd agree with that."

and his salvation of the X-Men.

But is he really egotistical? You wouldn't know it to meet him. The owner of New

He's self-assured, yes, but egotistical? He doesn't broadcast claims of greatness, nor does he flaunt his résumé. One Continuity co-worker labored alongside Adams for a year before realizing he was "*the* Neal Adams."

What Adams is is honest—to a fault, perhaps—and he never shies away from acknowledging his place of distinction in comic history, because it's a place no one can dispute.

"I live in a post-Neal Adams comic book world," admits Alex Ross (*JLA: Liberty and Justice*). "You wouldn't have me without there having been a Neal first."

"Neal was a pioneer," adds Marvel Editor-In-Chief Joe Quesada. "If I had to describe him in one word, I'd say 'genius.'"

For Adams, life—both inside and outside of comics—has always been about confidence, about making the impossible possible.

"Once you gain confidence," he says, "you can make your own destiny."

KNOCKING DOWN DOORS

Adams wasted no time forging a destiny of his own, marching into the office of legendary editor Julius Schwartz within months of joining DC in the late 1960s and requesting a shot at drawing Batman. Schwartz's response?

"Get the hell out of my office."

Undaunted, the artist was soon rewarded (in 1968) with a regular penciling and inking job on *Brave and the Bold*. It was an ancillary Bat-book at best, but Adams—in his own inimitable style—took the opportunity and made history.

His Batman, he decided, would be a bona fide "Dark Knight." Adams' contemporaries tended to set their Batman stories in the daytime, a penchant that baffled the young artist, who believed his fellow artists were pigeonholed by the TV show, robbing the character of his mystery.

In *Brave and The Bold*, Adams returned Batman to the night, a nocturnal crimefighter who faded in and out of shadows. The move worked, much to the surprise of Schwartz.

"Why," the editor asked the artist, "am I getting letters saying the only real Batman at DC is the Batman in *Brave and the Bold*?"

Adams didn't stop to think about his answer. He didn't have to. "Because it is the only real Batman," he said.

To Adams' recollection, Schwartz then asked, "How come you think you know what Batman ought to be?"

"Julie," he answered, "Every kid in America knows. The only people who don't seem to know what Batman is supposed to be are you guys at DC."

"Describe him in one word? GENIUS."

—Marvel Editor-In-Chief Joe Quesada

Not long after, Adams jumped over to the main Bat-titles and, paired with writer Denny O'Neil, ushered in one of the most successful, influential eras in the Dark Knight's long history.

"Neal was always one of my favorite artists," gushes O'Neil. "His pictures always exceeded whatever was in my head when I wrote the story. It is astonishing and gratifying that...years later, I'm being asked about the work we were doing. We sensed that we were pushing the envelope, but I doubt either of us anticipated the long, long life the stuff has had."

Adams almost single-handedly freed Batman from the effects of the Adam West TV show, purging him of his campy, cartoony elements and granting the Dark Knight a degree of realism not seen in decades. Adams' Batman had a well-defined musculature, rather than a puffed-out broad chest; stark angles and grim looks, rather than exaggerated curves and big smiles. He took an unbeatable superhero and made him believable.

"Neal is probably *the* definitive Batman artist," declares *1602* illustrator Andy Kubert. "He really revolutionized the character—his is the way people portray Batman now."

That, ironically, is why Adams ended his historic run on the book.

"Everybody had started to do my Batman," he remembers, "so I didn't have to do it anymore."

To truly appreciate the historical context of Adams' style and his impact on the Dark Knight, Quesada—who admits he "doesn't draw well enough" to emulate Adams' pen-

ADAMS' BOLD MOVE Neal Adams reinvented the Dark Knight in 1969, once again transforming Batman into a creature of the night and influencing Bat-creators for years to come.

THE MOST GROUNDBREAKING, CONTROVERSIAL COVER of Adams' illustrious comic career sprung not from a script, a plan or an editorial mandate of any kind—it came from his conscience.

Adams' moral sense told him he *needed* to draw the "Speedy shooting up" image that eventually ran on *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #85, so he just sat down and did it, never realizing he'd be earning himself a place in pop culture history.

The artist brought the finished image to Editor Julius Schwartz, who Adams remembers "dropped it like a hot potato." He then took it to Editor Carmine Infantino, only to get the same result.

"The Comics Code Authority won't allow this, I was told."

DC wouldn't challenge the authority of the Authority, but—fortunately for Adams—Marvel already had. Stan Lee had just approved the publication of an anti-drug issue of *Amazing Spider-Man* [(vol. 1) #96]. The issue hit the stands without the Comics Code seal, an unspeakably bold act on Lee's part. "Stan took the ball and nobody said no," Adams says. "It became *the* thing to talk about. DC Comics was fit to be tied. They had it in the palm of their hands and they dropped it.

"The Code was totally rewritten because of Stan and that cover within the month," Adams continues. "From that point on, comics were allowed to show drug addiction, among many other things. We couldn't show, step-by-step, how to do drugs and we couldn't glorify the act, but we could deal with the issue and the repercussions involved with it."

With the Code problem removed, the story went ahead. DC handed Adams' cover to *GL/GA* writer Denny O'Neil and, requesting only that the Speedy scene appear somewhere within, told him to write.

The rest is history. ■ CL

THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT DRUGS!
GREEN LANTERN
CO-STARRING
GREEN ARROW
ONLY 25¢ bigger is better
NO. 85 SEPT
YOU ALWAYS HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS GREEN ARROW! WELL WHAT'S YOUR ANSWER TO THAT--?
MY WARD SPEEDY IS A JUNKIE!
DC ATTACKS YOUTHS' GREATEST PROBLEM... DRUGS!

cils—suggests it's necessary to compare his work to the other comics of the day.

"You put Neal's stuff next to anything that was coming out in that time and you realize how amazingly revolutionary he was," Marvel's head honcho says. "It's like the jump between the art of the Dark Ages and the Renaissance. There was that big a leap in style, that big a leap in the realism of the style."

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Fans often applaud Adams for the realism of his pencil work, and sometimes describe his art as "photorealistic." That, the artist says, is a misnomer.

"I drew with more knowledge," he counters. "I knew how to use light, shadow. My stuff is...I don't know how you'd describe it."

Andy Kubert does. He calls it, quite simply, "some of the best stuff ever. Neal draws *really* well, but he knows how to exaggerate, so it all works. He does the foreshortening; he can do superheroes and realistic stuff. He just has such a good, basic foundation...a good knowledge of drawing."

Good sequential art depends on many different elements, Adams says, and it doesn't necessarily involve action—or even good drawing, for that matter. Sometimes it's about raising an eyebrow, directing the way someone looks at a page through the composition, or conveying humanity within the borders of a panel.

"Pick up a comic and look at it," he says. "Look at a panel where people are talking. Does it look like they're saying what they're saying? It should."

The acclaim Adams has enjoyed in comics is based on more than innate talent, more than just the natural gifts he refined at New York's School of Industrial Arts. His success can, in no small part, be traced back to his days in what he calls "The Real World"—the world outside of comic books.

After DC rejected his first portfolio ("They wouldn't even let me in the door"), Adams turned to newspapers and the advertising industry for work. "I've done advertising for as long as I can remember," he says. "Not a week's gone by I haven't done some form of ad work."

Barely 21, Adams already had a career dreamt of by most professional artists. Still, he wanted to draw comics. Not one to sit idly by, Adams studied the advertising industry, observing every aspect of it, broadening his knowledge in preparation for the career he knew would come. "Knowledge is power," he'd been told, so he made it his business to know everything.

"I knew a lot of stuff [when I came into comics]," he says. "And in comics, they didn't know much of anything. They were hiding behind a barrel, locked in time between 1953 and 1963.

"When I got into the industry, I had to ask myself, 'Am I going to do comics and change them, or will I do something else?'"

INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER

"It's amazing what you can do just by standing for things," Adams says. "I'd take a couple of minutes, make a decision, ask a question and something would change."

Adams questioned DC's color scheme, and wound up dou-

bling the number of colors in the company's roster from 32 to 64, giving Superman and the rest of the DC characters flesh tone for the first time

Adams wondered why freelancers used different names at Marvel than they did at DC (and vice versa), and—insisting all his work be accompanied by his given name—broke the back of the industry's unofficial pseudonym policy

He asked about page rates, artists got raises.

He questioned comic design, and revolutionized page and panel layout. "You can't control your eyes," Adams says. "They belong to me. If I, as an artist, want you to look at something, I can trick you into doing it. Don't think it's done unconsciously, either. It's a plan."

In short, Adams brought Marvel and DC up to speed with the rest of the publishing world. "I dragged them into the 20th Century," he smiles. "Kicking and screaming."

As a result, he earned a reputation. Adams became the "rabble rouser," a pain in the ass to some, a fearless crusader to others.

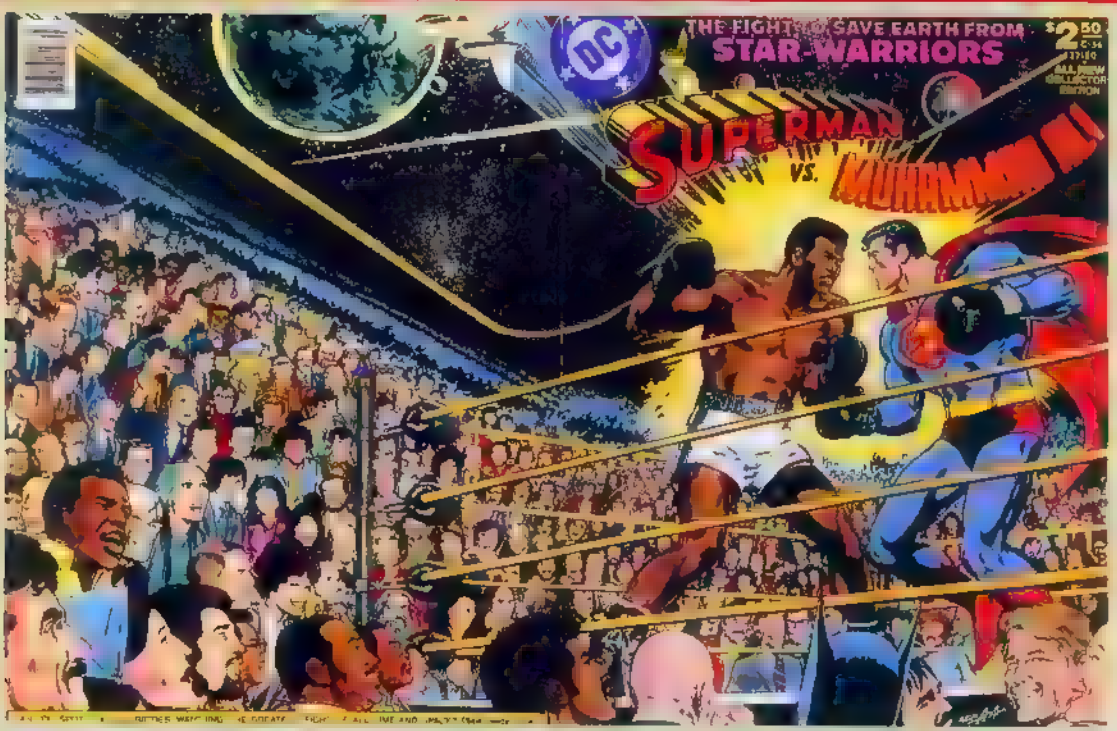
"Neal has always been a dynamo," says comic great Joe Kubert, a longtime pal and former editor of Adams. "He's a guy who not only says what he thinks is right, but pushes for it. There aren't a lot of guys like that."

In one such instance, Adams confronted DC on its policy of destroying original art. The company owned the printing rights, he argued, not the artwork itself, and therefore had no right to destroy the originals, as was the practice at the time.

Without "making a fuss or threatening anybody's life," Adams campaigned for the artists' right to have their artwork returned to them, reasoning that a motivated creator—one who knew his art could be sold for profit—would do better work. His battle, though a victory, was not without casualties. The cover to *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #85, the "Speedy shooting up cover" (see p. 78), disappeared from the art drawers in DC's offices before the artwork return policy came into effect.

"I could've just taken it," Adams says of the piece, "but I was fighting to have it returned and didn't want to create the impres-

MILESTONE SUPERMAN VS. MUHAMMAD ALI



ASK NEAL ADAMS TO NAME THE HIGH POINT OF HIS COMIC CAREER and, before you can finish the question, he'll answer: "***Superman-Muhammad Ali.***"

"Superman-Ali is, all around, a tour-de-force," the artist says of his oversized special from 1978. "It allowed me to reexamine Superman, which I hadn't done much, and illustrate boxing in the correct way. It allowed me to use double-page spreads in a big format, to reintroduce Superman in a glorious way—I loved doing that—and I got to draw all the aliens I wanted. Finally, I loved what Ali was and what he stood for."

And the cover?

"***Superman-Muhammad Ali*** possessed one of the most unique, wonderful comic covers ever," he concludes, "even though it was a pain in the ass."

The difficulties involved the famous folks Adams depicted. After work had already begun, and Adams had already started drawing the famous faces in the crowd, someone in DC's legal department became concerned about the usage of the likenesses. So, over Adams' protests, and in a display of what he likes to call "strange dumbness," DC started contacting the celebrities depicted, seeking permission to use their images.

Some said yes, some said no. John Wayne, for example, said no, which was a problem since Adams had already drawn him in.

"I didn't want to take him out," the artist admits, "so I just made a few changes. Now John Wayne has a mustache."

The cover, which featured more than 150 likenesses, made quite a splash. So much of one that an editor at *ESPN: The Magazine* remembered it, and contacted Adams to draw the cover to the magazine's "Millennium Issue" in 1999.

The issue would focus on the 100 greatest athletes of the century, and the editor specifically asked Adams if he'd be willing to draw them at a boxing match between Michael Jordan and Ali.

"Despite the weight of the world on my shoulders, I thought 'This is cool,'" Adams says. "It's a once-in-a-century cover, and I'm not going to be around for the next one." ■ **CL**

RECOGNIZE THE NAME "X-MEN"? WITHOUT NEAL ADAMS, YOU might not.

When, in the mid-1960s, Stan Lee offered Adams his pick of Marvel series, the artist chose the company's worst selling book, a distinction that belonged to—believe it or not—*Uncanny X-Men*.

Lee granted the illustrator's wish to draw the final two issues and then go on to an important title like *Avengers*, and Adams began penciling *Uncanny X-Men* with issue #56. Working alongside writer Roy Thomas, he reintroduced the Sentinels and the Savage Land, brought Magneto back from limbo and resurrected Professor X from an even more protracted and lingering death and burial. Yet despite the efforts of the new creative team, Marvel canceled the series after not two, but a better-than-expected nine issues.

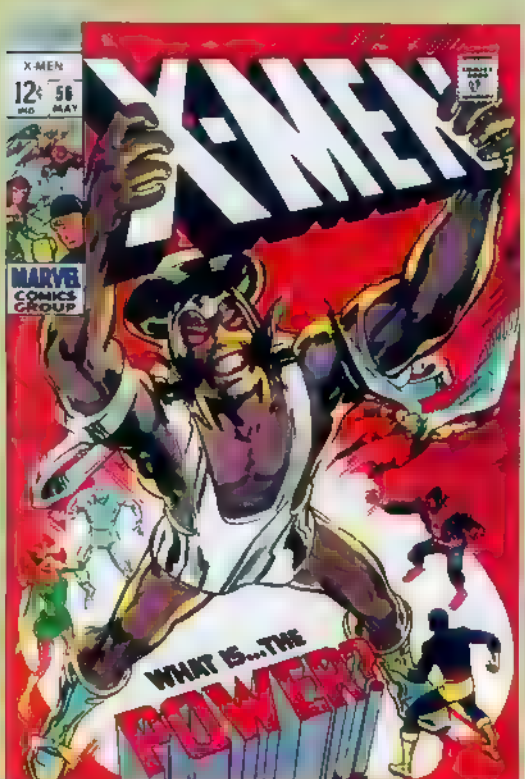
"Six months later," Adams notes, "they found out it sold."

Looking back, Adams feels his *Uncanny X-Men* issues, though few in number, made "a real contribution" to what has since become comicdom's most successful franchise. Based on his innovative handling of the characters, their interpersonal relationships and the way they'd tackle problems, Adams considers his and Thomas' run on the series "one of the first team books well done."

It's not hard to verify that claim. Following the series' cancellation, demand for the Merry Mutants—on the part of fans *and* creators—rose dramatically.

"Everybody that came to Marvel afterward wanted to do the X-Men," Adams says. "Everyone who's come has, in turn, done their own variation on our stories—every team since then has done the Sentinels, Magneto and the Savage Land."

Chris Claremont and John Byrne did 'em. So did Claremont and Jim Lee. *Ultimate X-Men* actually kicked off with a storyline involving all three. Even so, Adams scoffs at the suggestion that he made the X-Men the juggernauts they are today. "I was the pivot that turned it in the right direction," he says, "somebody who said, 'Look at what these characters can do.' The X-Men needed that." ■ CL



sion I was doing it solely for my own benefit. Just taking my art—which was a common practice—would have defeated my argument."

Not everyone shared his sense of honor, and by the time Adams won the battle to get original artwork returned, the Speedy cover had vanished, and was recently offered for sale at auction for more than $40,000.

The artist doesn't care so much about the money himself—he was paid only $60 to create the piece—but equates it to savings his children will never see. "College money," he calls it.

For years, Adams pursued the art that had been stolen from him throughout his career, hoping to catch those responsible. He's since given up the hunt. "By now, the art's changed hands so many times that the people who own it obtained it through legal channels," he says. "They aren't responsible...I can't just take it back from them. Bless them."

[redacted]

Of all the changes Adams has brought about, of all the perceived wrongs he's righted, none can compare—in either magnitude or personal importance—with the work he did for Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the "two kids from Cleveland" who gave birth to the world's greatest superhero—Superman.

In the 1970s, Adams, in his capacity as president of the Academy of Comic Book Arts, received a letter from Siegel detailing his and Shuster's plight.

At the time, Siegel worked as a clerk, pulling in about $7,000 a year. Shuster, whose vision had deteriorated almost to the point of blindness, lived in his brother's apartment in Queens. He slept on a cot and, when possible, worked as a messenger. DC had paid the pair a reported $130 for their character and their pages in 1938. The duo received no real royalties, no benefits and little credit for the legend they'd birthed.

"Jerry was always a little bitter, but Joe never was. He couldn't afford an overcoat; he could hardly see anymore, but," Adams holds up a hand scant inches from his face, "he would always draw pictures of Superman for little kids at the coffee shop."

Adams argued for Siegel and Shuster's position. "There probably wouldn't be a comic book business if not for them," he reasoned. "We all owed them a debt."

With his DC connections, Adams believed he was in a position to see that debt paid. He contacted people at the company, and heard—time and again—that he should leave things alone.

"No one would help," the artist says. "Somebody had to do something."

He approached Siegel and Shuster himself and, determined to correct what he considered a grave injustice, volunteered to be that somebody. They agreed to let him be their voice. Adams thrust Siegel and Shuster's case into the public eye, contacting talk shows and arranging interviews, all the while trying to drum up support within the artistic community.

"These men created Superman," he told the assembly at a Cartoonists' Society meeting. "*Superman*. There wouldn't be superheroes without them. The genre exists because of what they did. Without them, most of you wouldn't even have jobs. You make a living off their work. Now they're on hard times."

Adams' impassioned plea to the Cartoonists Society Board was overheard by the president of the Overseas Press Club, who offered the forum to hold a press conference.

The reaction? "[DC parent company] Warner Bros. sh-- a brick," a smiling Adams recalls.

As a result, Siegel and Shuster received not only compensation for their work but recognition for their contribution to American culture. To this day, the line "Superman created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster" accompanies every Superman appearance, be it in print, on television or the silver screen.

"Neal was the guy behind Siegel and Shuster really being recognized," Joe Kubert says. "He was the one who got the powers that be up at the Superman company to give something back."

ADAMS CREATES THE UNIVERSE

As an artist, Adams may no longer be churning out hundreds of comic pages and dozens of covers per year, but that doesn't mean he's working any less.

The man's daily workload would likely break anyone else. In addition to his advertising responsibilities—Adams has worked on commercials for Ocean Spray, Campbell's Soups, Nestle, Tropicana and Kodak—overseeing Continuity's studios in New York and L.A, penciling an occasional piece for comics and regularly hitting the gym, Adams devotes an amazing amount of time, thought and effort to a project he calls his "proudest professional accomplishment."

It's called *A Conversation Between Two Guys In A Bar, or A New Model of the Universe*, a 125-page graphic novel about one of Adams' favorite topics, theoretical physics. In it, Adams offers his own theory on the creation (and continued growth) of the universe, one that challenges both the Big Bang Theory, the Pangea Theory and some of Albert Einstein's views of the cosmos. Critics say he's setting out to do the impossible, but Adams is positive he's on the right track.

"People tell me I'm an idiot," he says, "but my theory makes sense. It's going to mess people up."

LOOKING AHEAD

Comics. Advertising. Theoretical physics. It's no wonder Adams describes his career as amorphous, a "career in transition."

"If all I did was comic books, I'd just be one more guy doing comic books," he says. "Now I can do things I was never able to do before."

To hear Adams speak about the future, one would be hard-pressed to believe they were listening to a man who's been working and pushing himself for more than 35 years. He doesn't mind talking about the past—he's aware he's accomplished some pretty terrific things—but it's when Adams talks about the future that he truly comes to life. He equates the condition of current scientific theory with DC Comics in the early Sixties...needing a new way to think.

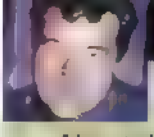
He anxiously awaits the launch of *Two Guys*, has already written a novel based on his formative years, and believes he's got more novels in him, as well as a film. He's got story ideas to pitch to both Marvel and DC, and aspires to launch a project called *Rise of Magic* through Continuity in the near future.

"I'm tremendously proud I'm a comic book artist and I've let it show," offers Adams. "I'm happy with my life. Sometimes I think that comes across as boastful, but I know I'm good at what I do. It's not always easy, though. I have to struggle every time I sit down to draw. I keep looking for a better way."

Whether he admits it or not, Adams has changed both the art and business of comics, forever altering the medium's visual style and laying the foundation for the rights and privileges enjoyed by all the creators who've followed. Were those creators to assemble before him, to cram into an auditorium to hear the words of one of the industry's greatest living legends, would Adams have something to tell them?

"Be f---king grateful I'm not coming back and kicking your asses," Adams concludes. "I would, too."

Freelance writer Christopher Lawrence is extremely grateful he didn't get his ass kicked by Neal Adams—and you should be, too!



KNOW IT ALL

FIVE THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT NEAL ADAMS

Adams graduated in 1959 from New York's School of Industrial Arts, where he helped change the curriculum from "Cartooning" to "Cartooning and Comics."

The SIA required 10 finished pieces for review in Adams' senior year, but the workhorse artist submitted 110!

Adams first pro work came at Archie Comics, where he received $32.50 for pencils, inks, lettering and writing.

Adams and longtime collaborator Denny O'Neil not only created a legendary anti-drug comic with *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #85, they researched at a rehab center called Phoenix House where ex-addicts counseled recovering drug abusers.

Adams did the initial design work on the Spider-Man ride at Universal's Islands of Adventure, the first and final conceptual design for the Terminator T2 3-D ride, as well as a Batman-themed ride currently being tested at an amusement park in Spain.

POINT OF VIEW Whether working on Deadman (inset) or the X-Men (above), Neal Adams challenged readers' expectations of what comics could be.

By the Wizard Staff

ESSENT

We present a must-have list of the single greatest stories that define the icons of DC Comics

Original art opening by Gabriele Dell'Otto

TAL DC

SUPERMAN

He's considered the end-all be-all in terms of superheroes. He possesses abilities far beyond those of [illegible] at the same time he's an everyman. Not to mention the whole "saving Earth's collective butts" more times than can be mentioned here.

ACTION COMICS #775 (2001)
Creators: Writer Joe Kelly, artists Doug Mahnke and Lee Bermejo

Yet in *Action Comics* #775 Superman meets a foe so great even he had to resort to desperate measures. No, it wasn't the Elite—a gang of take-no-prisoners "heroes" led by the snide Manchester Black—but rather a public that has grown tired of the big blue Boy Scout.

After the Elite begins to garner public support with their "kill first, ask questions" later approach to thwarting evil, Superman attempts to teach them his approach to solving problems. But despite his track record, it seems as though the general public craves more of The Elite's brand of justice, and their popularity only increases when they hand the Man of Steel his ass. Even Lois, Ma and Pa Kent begin to doubt that Supes will be able to overcome a force as powerful as the Elite. Yet the real twist comes when, having no other options, Supes stoops to the Elite's level and brutally murders the entire team—or so it seems.

While *Action* #775 served as a commentary on a lot of the anti-hero superteam books of the time—namely Wildstorm's *Authority* and Marvel's *X-Force*—writer Joe Kelly simply saw the standout issue as a celebration of a milestone.

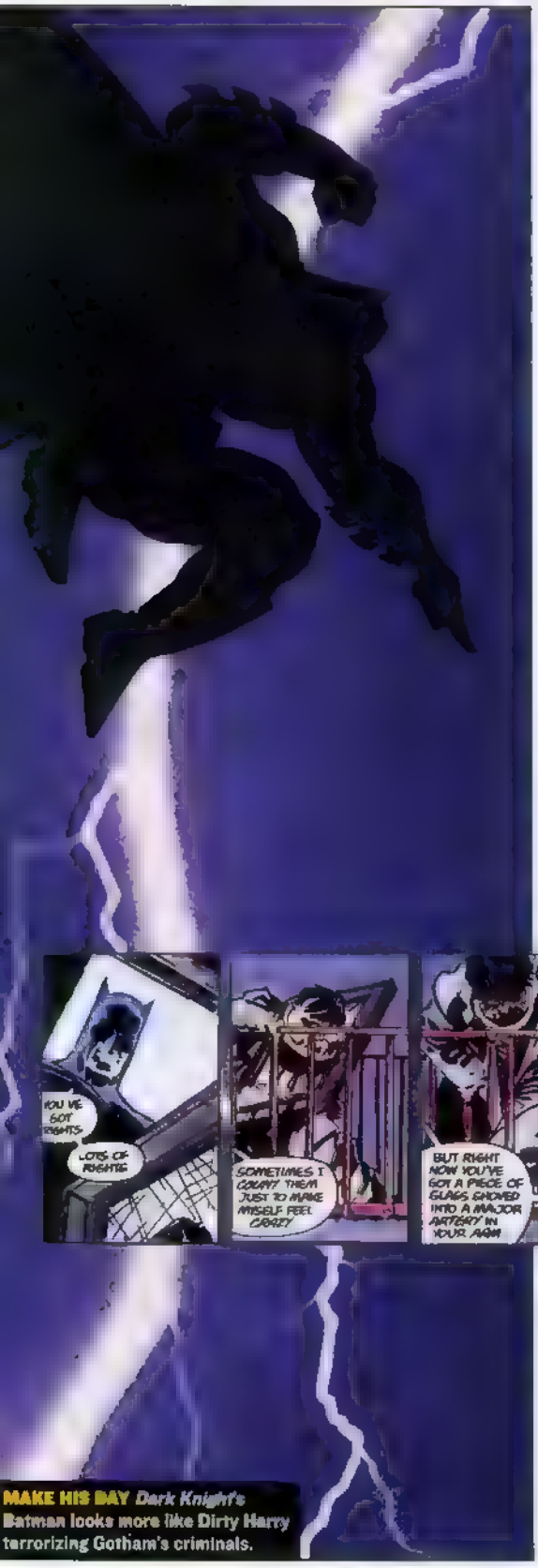
"[Superman Group Editor] Eddie Berganza and I wanted to do something special for #775, seeing that it was a milestone issue, and we also wanted to put an emphasis on Superman's place in comic history," recalls Kelly. "Given the fact that, at the time, those types of superteams were popular, we figured that would be a great focus for the story. I honestly had no idea going into this that it would mean so much to Superman fans and become such an important issue. I just thought I was writing a really good story."

ALSO CHECK OUT: Alan Moore's take on Superman in the one-shot *Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow* and *Superman Annual* #11 (both recently collected in the recent *Across the Universe: The DC Universe Stories of Alan Moore* trade paperback) are definitely worth their weight in steel. In *Man of Tomorrow*, Moore tells of the twilight years of Superman and shows how a single hero can change the course of history. And in *Annual* #11 Moore reveals an untold layer of Superman, by giving the Man of Steel the life he would have had on Krypton. Also, Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale's *Superman: For All Seasons* emphasizes the "man" in Superman with a "year one" tale the duo have become synonymous with. ■ **CASEY SEIJAS**

HOW DOES IT *FEEL*, KNOWING THAT EVERYTHING YOU *THOUGHT* YOU HAD HAS BEEN *TAKEN AWAY* FROM YOU?
HOW DOES IT FEEL TO HAVE YOUR *FLAWS EXPLOITED?* TO BE *DECONSTRUCTED?*
HOW DOES IT FEEL TO *WATCH DREAMS DIE?*

SUPER SCARY Have Manchester Black and his Elite's violence pushed Superman too far?

I LOOKED INTO YOUR BRAIN FOR *ABNORMALITIES*. FOUND AN OVERDEVELOPED *CHUNK* THAT LOOKED *NASTY*... AND *I CUT IT OUT*.
YOU *WHAT*? YOU -- YOU *CAN'T* DO THAT
I *CAN*. *HEAT* VISION FOCUSED THROUGH YOUR *RETINA*. INVISIBLE *SCALPEL*.
INSTANT LOBOTOMY.


YOU'VE GOT RIGHTS.
LOTS OF RIGHTS.
SOMETIMES I COUNT THEM JUST TO MAKE MYSELF FEEL CRAZY.
BUT RIGHT NOW YOU'VE GOT A PIECE OF GLASS SHOVED INTO A MAJOR ARTERY IN YOUR ARM.
RIGHT NOW YOU'RE BLEEDING TO DEATH.
RIGHT NOW I'M THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD WHO CAN GET YOU TO A HOSPITAL IN TIME.

MAKE HIS DAY *Dark Knight's* Batman looks more like Dirty Harry terrorizing Gotham's criminals.

The future world of the DCU has spiraled into moral decay. Particularly Gotham City, as anarchy and gang warfare keep GCPD's hold on the law tenuous at best. Its citizens live in fear, all whispering in hush tones: "Where is Batman?"

BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS (1986)
Creators: Writer and penciler Frank Miller, and inker Klaus Janson

He's dead, actually—and he'll stay that way as long as Bruce Wayne has anything to say about it. Since the death of Robin many years earlier, the fiftysomething Wayne closed the Batcave for good, and now lives the playboy life that was once a convenient ruse. A good life, he believes. But his subconscious self-loathing—evidenced by denial, a death wish and inner demons—slams him back into reality. To reclaim his destiny.

Batman is born again. And God help the guilty.

The Dark Knight takes back the night with an attitude and methods that remind one of Dirty Harry, proving why this tale endures as the ultimate spin on Gotham's protector. Take this example: With a thug aiming a rifle his way, Batman assesses the situation. "There are seven working defenses from this position," he thinks. "Three of them disarm with minimal contact. Three of them kill. The other," kicking out the thug's spine, "hurts."

"My Batman is essentially a terrorist who just fights the right enemy," says Miller.

And the "enemy" ain't far behind. Two-Face and the Joker remain old dogs with new tricks as their body count they claim rises ever higher.

Never one to be upstaged, the Joker stages his final Bat-showdown by murdering the 206-member audience of TV host, David Endochrine (a hilariously macabre ode to David Letterman).

Batman's response to the clown prince: "From the beginning, I knew that there's nothing wrong with you that I can't fix...with my hands."

The final round is left for Superman, a soldier of the U.S. President—who, in this future, remains Ronald Reagan—and is ordered to take care of his problem in Gotham. In an unforgettable finale, it's the Dark Knight versus the Man of Steel for all the marbles.

"Too many people forget how funny and romantic the story was a lot of the time," notes Miller, of Dark Knight's "grim 'n' gritty" legacy. "I set out to bring myth back to the character, not to create a sad old man in tights. He clearly enjoyed what he was doing."

And so do we.

ALSO CHECK OUT: *Batman: Year One*—also by Frank Miller, with artist David Mazzucchelli—not only re-invents the character's origin but gives true life to a young GCPD captain named Gordon. Also, for more great scenes between Bats and Gordon, you can't go wrong with Greg Rucka's *Legends of the Dark Knight* #125, where Batman reveals his secret identity to Gordon, but with a twist even the DCU's greatest detective didn't see coming. And Joe Kelly's *Action Comics* #766 proves to be an endearing Superman/Batman story, as the Dark Knight attempts to save both Lois Lane and Superman, who's dying from kryptonite poisoning. ■ **BRIAN CUNNINGHAM**

Wonder Woman: The Hiketeia pulls off the impossible—it transforms a Greek tragedy into a compelling comic read.

"I wanted to write a tragic story," says Rucka of the graphic novel. "I wanted to deal with the fact that Diana lives in both worlds. She is bound by Greek myth, as much as she's bound by real life."

WONDER WOMAN: THE HIKETEIA (2002)
CREATORS: Writer Greg Rucka, penciler J.G. Jones and inker Wade von Grawbadger

It's pulled off better than any other story chronicling the super-strong Amazon princess. *Hiketeia* follows a young woman named Danielle Wellys, whose sister has been killed at the hands of drug dealers. The story opens with Danielle getting her final revenge by murdering the last of the dealers who did her sister wrong. Not knowing where else to turn for shelter, Danielle turns to her hero—Wonder Woman—for help. But Danielle tricks Diana by invoking the mythical ritual "Hiketeia" which binds the Amazon to protect her no matter what. If broken, the Amazon would be torn apart by the ritual's watchdogs: the three bloodthirsty Furies.

Making matters worse, Wonder Woman soon learns of Danielle's heinous deeds and that she must protect her from the one man who has been tracking Danielle for months and will stop at nothing to bring her to justice. Batman. Even if he has to go through a powerhouse like Diana to get her.

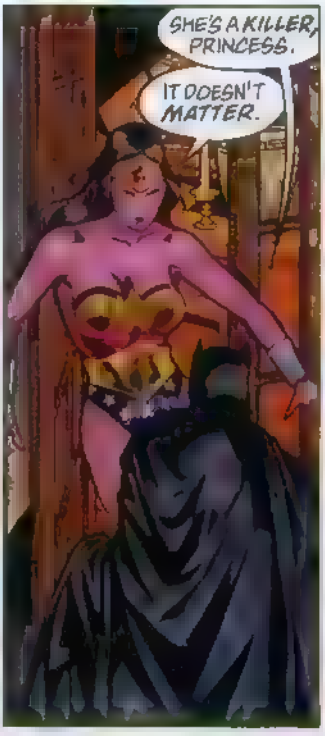
"I asked myself what is the appropriate opposing force for Diana, or the one person who's just not gonna take no for an answer?" says Rucka. "And that's Batman."

Watch the two JLAers match wits and try to outduel the other for custody of Danielle. With his back to a corner, Batman plays a trump card that's certain to shock you in a way only the ever-prepared Dark Knight can do.

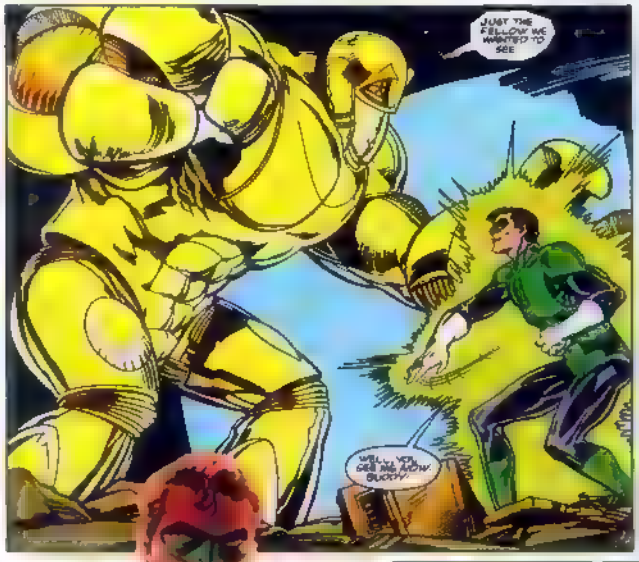
Rucka nails the persona of Wonder Woman—a warrior, fiercely loyal to her morals, his portrayal of Batman serves as a metaphor for the modern world in opposition to Diana's ancient heritage. Penciler J.G. Jones struts his stuff, creating a super-sexy Amazon, a super-sleek Dark Knight and super-creepy Furies.

Next time you're at a comic store, invoke your own Hiketeia binding the manager to sell you a copy of this tale. The Furies won't mind.

ALSO CHECK OUT: In *Kingdom Come*, Mark Waid and Alex Ross' portrayal of a Amazonian princess who succumbs to her warrior side shows that even Wonder Woman must ditch her mission of peace for the greater good. Meanwhile, if you're looking to see how the modern Amazon got her start, check out George Pérez's gorgeous *Wonder Woman* (current series) #1-#6, which ties Diana more closely to Greek mythology. And knowing what he did with *The Hiketeia*, be sure and pick up Greg Rucka's *Wonder Woman* #195 in August, the first issue of what we hope is a lengthy run on the series by Rucka and artist Drew Johnson. ■ **CS & BC**



BAT DROPPINGS Worlds collide as Wonder Woman harbors a murderer that Batman will fight her for.



More than anything else, *Emerald Dawn* puts the "green" in Green Lantern. So much, that this tale reinterprets DC's usually stalwart intergalactic cop as a rookie screw-up.

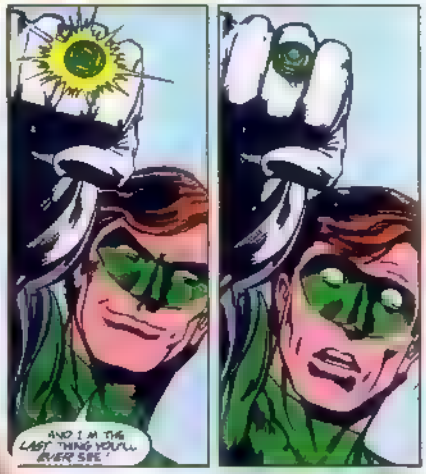
Emerald Dawn retells the origin of Hal Jordan, exploring his life before and after he took on the mantle of Green Lantern of space sector 2814. Chronicling his downfalls, the story focuses more on Jordan's issues with irresponsibility before evolving into the Green Lantern Corps' greatest champion. When dying GL Abin Sur crashes to Earth, he taps Jordan as his replacement—apparently Sur sees something in Jordan that no one else does. And how could they? Hal's alcoholic binge leads to a car accident injuring his friends, a demotion at work, a bad break-up with the boss' daughter and jail-time due to the DUI car crash.

GREEN LANTERN: EMERALD DAWN #1-#6 (1989)
Creators: Writers Jim Owsley, Keith Giffen and Gerard Jones, penciler M.D. Bright and inker Romeo Tanghal

"Somebody who gets behind the wheel of a car—loaded out of his mind and almost kills somebody—is an a--hole!" admits co-writer Keith Giffen "Yes, Hal will eventually evolve into a hero, but I found it interesting to see that process."

Unfortunately for Hal, that process is excruciating. Abin Sur's murderer—an unstoppable juggernaut called Legion—comes hunting for his would-be replacement, and Hal learns the GL ropes in live battle, breaking all the rules We're talking nuclear explosions and almost destroying the GLC's home planet Oa.

"I didn't necessarily destroy a superhero," reflects Giffen. "I'd like to think I turned somebody who was so full of himself, leaving no room for somebody else, and transforming him into a hero by seeing how he develops a sense of responsibility."

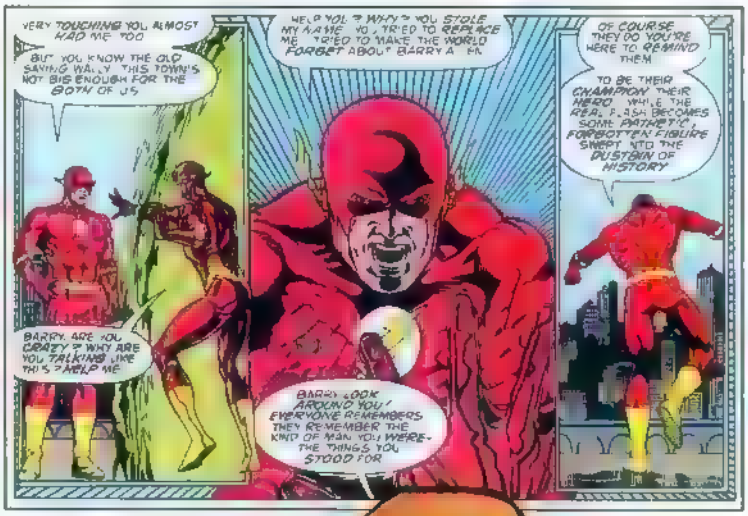


D'OH! The rookie GL doesn't realize his powerful ring does diddly-squat against anything colored yellow.

ALSO CHECK OUT: DC's recent re-release of the sequel *Green Lantern: Emerald Dawn II* TPB by Giffen, Jones, Bright and Tanghal also packs punch If you think Hal had it hard in the first *Dawn*, wait 'til he trains with Sinestro, whose fall from grace as a Green Lantern happens here. Also, while fans may consider Hal to be the one and only Green Lantern, the debut of Kyle Rayner in the "A New Dawn" storyarc (*Green Lantern* #50-#55, also in TPB) by Ron Marz and Darryl Banks made for a compelling new GL. In *Green Lantern: The Road Back* TPB by Jones and Pat Broderick, which finds the Guardians vanished from the universe and the Green Lantern Corps disbanded—can the surviving GLs Hal Jordan, John Stewart and Guy Gardner get along long enough to rebuild the Corps? ■ **CS & BC**

To fans of DC's Scarlet Speedster, "The Return of Barry Allen" does the unthinkable, and you need not look farther than the title of the storyarc to understand why.

FLASH #74-#79 (1993)
Creators: Writer Mark Waid, penciler Greg LaRocque and inker Roy Richardson


VERY TOUCHING YOU ALMOST HAD ME TOO
BUT YOU KNOW THE OLD SAYING WALLY THIS TOWN'S NOT BIG ENOUGH FOR THE BOTH OF US
HELLO YOU? WHY? YOU STOLE MY NAME YOU TRIED TO REPLACE ME TRIED TO MAKE THE WORLD FORGET ABOUT BARRY ALLEN
OF COURSE THEY DO YOU'RE HERE TO REMIND THEM
TO BE THEIR CHAMPION THEIR HERO WHILE THE REAL FLASH BECOMES SOME PATHETIC FORGOTTEN FIGURE SWEPT INTO THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY
BARRY ARE YOU CRAZY? WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE THIS? HELP ME
BARRY LOOK AROUND YOU! EVERYONE REMEMBERS THEY REMEMBER THE KIND OF MAN YOU WERE THE THINGS YOU STOOD FOR

Mark Waid's controversial tale—recently reissued in a TPB format—not only resurrects the Silver Age Flash (a.k.a. Barry Allen), but also his nemesis Prof. Zoom, in two stunning twists. Allen had died years earlier to save the universe in the epic mini-series *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and many fans felt his revival would water down the single greatest sacrifice in DCU history. But all that doesn't matter to Allen's former sidekick and current Flash, Wally West—to Wally, Allen's return is cause for celebration.

Yet everything's not a happy family reunion in Keystone City. Since the fateful day he'd gained his super-speed powers, Wally had always lived in his mentor's shadow, moreso since his untimely death. From the day he put on Allen's costume in tribute, Wally competed with the legacy left by a ghost—and had only begun getting comfortable with the role. Now that Allen had returned, Wally wonders: *Am I merely Kid Flash again?*

The identity crisis amplifies, as both Barry and Wally soon begin to realize that there's only room for one Fastest Man Alive in the DCU. As shown when the two (joined by Golden Age Flash Jay Garrick) take on a team of super-armored terrorists calling themselves The Combine, Barry makes it perfectly clear to the other Flashes that he is indeed the one true Flash by pummeling a member of the Combine. And things get even worse for poor Wally when Prof. Zoom shows up to create more misery for him.

This tale not only serves up a twist that no *Flash* fan could possibly see coming, but also shows Wally truly stepping into his own as Flash. Waid's story proves that being the fastest man in the DCU comes with a rich tradition...but also, as a result, a heavy burden.

ALSO CHECK OUT: Waid also wins another race with his five-part "Terminal Velocity" (*Flash* #95-#100) where, fearing his demise at the hands of Kobra, Wally must find his replacement. Current *Flash* superstar writer Geoff Johns also keeps pace with the four-part "Blood Will Run" (*Flash* #170-#173) where Flash takes on a murderous cult headed up by the mysterious Cicada. And also see how Johns transformed Flash's Rogues Gallery into a lethal force with the five-part "Crossfire" (*Flash* #184-#188). ■ **CS & BC**

WEST GOES SOUTH
When Wally's mentor returns from the dead, the ramifications run him over like a 4x4.

Want a super-adrenaline-charged superhero story to the Nth degree? Look no further than "New World Order," where writer Grant Morrison turns the JLA on its ear as the most powerful superteam in all of comics meets its match

JLA #1-#4 (1997)
Creators: Writer Grant Morrison, penciler Howard Porter and inker John Dell

It starts off with a slow burn. A group of seven aliens called the Hyperclan land on the White House lawn, proclaiming they're here to save the Earth. These Superman-like beings claim their world was destroyed by greed and war—and they will protect this one from that fate. From their fertilization of the Sahara Desert, the Hyperclan push aside a skeptical Justice League as the world's most popular superteam

But something's not right about these aliens. And it's Batman who figures it out: the Hyperclan uses mass-mind-control to dupe the world as it gears up for a silent invasion of the rest of its superpowered race. Calling it war, the JLA stands as Earth's first and last line of defense—all while protecting a world that adores the Hyperclan much more than they.

One by one, each Leaguer faces these indomitable foes...and falls. Wonder Woman, burnt to a crisp. Aquaman KOed. Flash run ragged. Green Lantern outmatched Superman crippled by kryptonite. Batman caught in a fiery tomb as his plane crashes. And Martian Manhunter betrays the League by joining the Hyperclan—just as Superman's televised execution for treason and terrorism is set to commence

But slowly the aliens' best-laid plans unravel. Security drones are mysteriously dismantled. Hyperclan members are dispatched, only to find one Leaguer free: Batman.

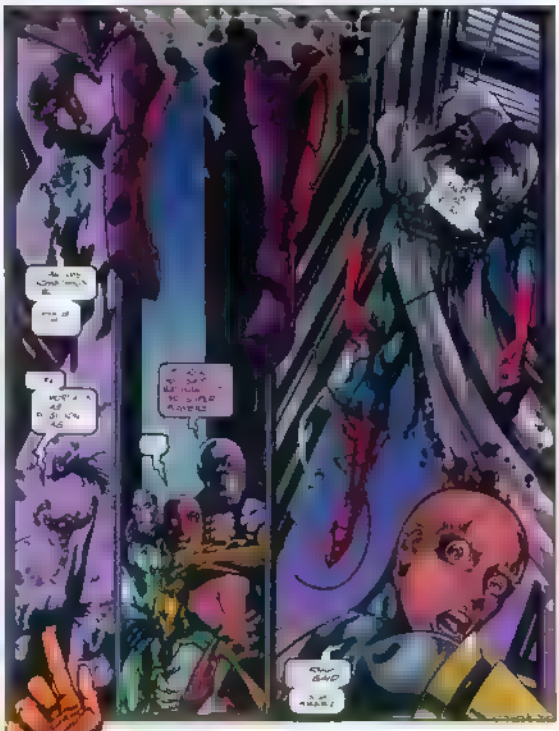
"What can a pathetic, fragile creature like Batman do to us?" gloats Protex, the Hyperclan leader. "He's only one man!"

Only the most dangerous man on Earth," whispers a weakened Superman

And it's go time. Discovering the aliens' weakness, the Dark Knight sets out to free his captive teammates, just as the Hyperclan's massive invasion force descends upon a defenseless Earth.

What's amazing about this four-part tale is that each of DC's big guns gets their moment of unforgettable coolness. Even guys like Martian Manhunter and Aquaman! "New World Order"—found in TPB format—put one of comics' premier superteams clearly in a league of its own.

ALSO CHECK OUT: Morrison once again nails the JLA with the hardcover one-shot, *JLA: Earth 2*, which finds the JLA taking on evil versions of themselves in a world where Lex Luthor's consid ered a hero. For a lighter look at the superhero biz, pick up Keith Giffen, J.M DeMatteis and Kevin Maguire's *Justice League* #1-#7 (1987), which makes characters like Booster Gold, Blue Beetle and Guy Gardner fun to read. And in the JLA/JSA crossover graphic novel *Virtue and Vice*, by Geoff Johns and David Goyer, DC's two big superteams face off after key characters are possessed by the seven deadly sins ■ **BC**



THE BEST Even on a team of uber-heroes, Batman—as shown up top—can still do the most damage.

If anything, "The Judas Contract" shreds superteam ideals by asking, "Who do you trust?"

Co-plotting creators Wolfman and Pérez craft an all-new art of deception with their iconic version of the Teen Titans. In fact, a true appreciation of this tale (which DC recently collected into a trade paperback) comes from knowing that it comprises only a patch among a larger, more sinister tapestry.

TEEN TITANS: THE JUDAS CONTRACT (1984)
Creators: Writer Marv Wolfman, penciler George Pérez and inkers Dick Giordano and Mike DeCarlo

Approximately a year before "Judas" begins, a snarky young girl named Terra joins the Teen Titans under peculiar--and as a result, sympathetic—circumstances. At first, the earth-manipulating teen fights them, claiming she's a pawn of terrorists who have kidnapped her parents. The Titans resolve the issue, but not before learning the kidnappers had killed Terra's parents long ago without her knowledge. All alone in the world, Terra seeks refuge with the Titans.

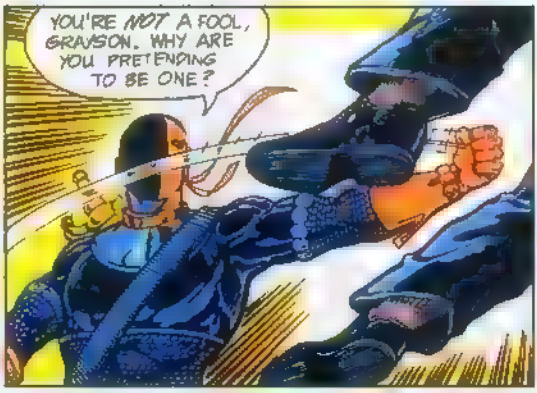
Over the course of the next year, Terra's sarcastic 'tude wins her teammates over. They let her in on all of their secrets—their real identities, their personal lives, their day jobs...everything.

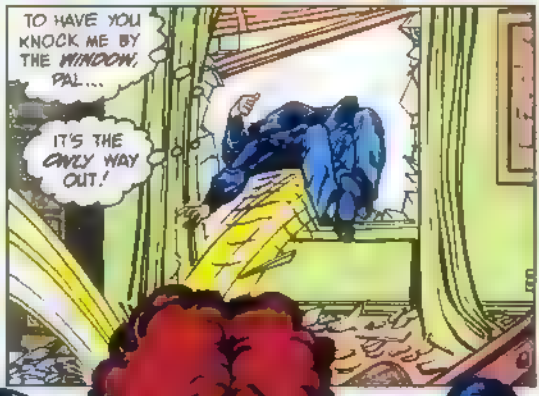
The lead-in to "Judas" serves up the ultimate whammy. Terra serves under the employ of the Titans' No. 1 nemesis, Deathstroke the Terminator...and has been from the start. And now the pair—hired by the nefarious organization known as the H.I.V.E.—know exactly how, where and when to strike at the start of "Judas."

And pounce they do, systematically taking out each Titan, one by one, for eventual execution at the hands of the H.I.V.E. With one exception: the ex-Robin, Dick Grayson, who outmanuevers the far superior Deathstroke to escape and plan his teammates' liberation in a then-new guise of Nightwing. The ensuing battle for the Titans' freedom comes at a high cost, and Terra's duplicity cuts too deep, as one Titan perishes by story's end. Perhaps the deepest wound went to Changeling (now called Beast Boy)—before "Judas," he believed that he and Terra had a blossoming romance, instead her deception devastated him with a broken heart.

"The Judas Contract" proves that innocence can be lost at any time, and things aren't always what they seem. The teenage life still walks its road of hard knocks...but for the Teen Titans, "Judas" left them a world more dangerous than ever.

ALSO CHECK OUT: If it's got the names "Wolfman and Pérez" on the cover, then it's gotta be good. And the following three examples kick ass. Pick up the first four issues of *New Teen Titans* (vol. 1) and see how these Titans ain't a Junior JLA. *New Teen Titans* (vol. 1) #20 serves as a touching one-shot story where Wally West (then going by Kid Flash) writes his parents describing what it means to be a Titan. Finally, the "Who Killed Trident?" storyarc in *Titans* (vol. 1) #33 presents a unique murder mystery that'll have you guessing until the very end. ■ **BC & CS**





TERRA-BLE When Terra (center) sells out the Titans to Deathstroke (at top, swinging), only Nightwing escapes to fight another day.

DRAWING POWER Where do artists like Jim Lee (Batman), Adam Hughes (Supergirl, Rogue and Wonder Woman) and Bryan Hitch (Ultimate Captain America) fall in this feature?

THE BEST ARTISTS IN COMICS

From pencils to hot babes and everything in between, we pick the premier penciller and painter working today

Think back to the very first time you ever saw a comic book. What got you hooked? Was it the witty dialogue? The intricate plot twists? The deep character development?

Probably not. Odds are, you were reeled in by one thing and one thing alone: the art.

Don't get us wrong—writers are still a vital half of the comic creating process. But without the artists, all you've got are word balloons on a page. Writers like Brian Michael Bendis and Mark Millar may craft the stories that captivate us, but artists like Jim Lee and Alex Ross create the pictures that bring those stories to magnificent and colorful life.

With some of the most talented artists in the business edging back into the comic spotlight, *Wizard* shines the light on today's masters of pencil, pen and brush. We showcase today's best artists in a range of artistic categories, giving you the inside scoop on the masters that toil away at their drafting tables to create the best comic book art on the shelves. We even go straight to the artists themselves to get their take on how they execute their craft. And in the process, we give your eyes a feast for the ages.

So get ready to dig in.

BRIAN BOLLAND

[illegible] Covers for DC's *Batman: Gotham Knights*, Vertigo's *Blood & Water*

[illegible] This British artist is proof that you *can* judge a book by its cover. Bolland's realistic renderings earned him a devoted fan-following in England, where he honed his craft on classic Judge Dredd stories from *2000 AD*. After breaking into the U.S. scene with DC's *Camelot 3000* mini-series, Bolland unleashed his most famous work to date—1988's legendary *Batman: The Killing Joke*. Since then, his work has graced the covers of titles such as *Flash* and *Wonder Woman*.

[illegible] PERFORMANCE "My first professional work was a small black-and-white watercolor illustration of jazz bassist Buddy Guy for London's *Time Out* magazine back in 1971, for which I was paid five quid [about $7.50 American]," recalls Bolland.

[illegible] WORK OF HIS OWN "Providing it's going okay, whatever I'm working on at the time. Looking back, I quite liked the *Judge Dredd* covers I did for Eagle Comics when they were first packaged for the U.S. And I liked the *Tank Girl* covers I did for Vertigo. There are some rejected prelims I did for that series which would have made great covers, particularly the one in which she shoots the baby. I also liked the cover to *Animal Man* #25 (**below**) with the monkey and the typewriter."

[illegible] "My basic drawing style is kinda Silver Age DC. It's crisp with a lot of finely controlled ink lines—too many of 'em, probably. I hope it doesn't look computer generated, even though it is. Occasionally I deviate into a bit of photo montage and Photoshop jiggery-pokery, and occasionally I draw in a scratchy scruffy scrawl."

[illegible] "The main value of a really great cover? Well, without it you'd be looking at the first newsprint page of the story! Obviously it's the thing you see first, and when you're confronted by a whole wall of covers, it's got to stand out in some way."

LIFE OF BRIAN Brian Bolland's not above using "jiggery-pokery"—whatever the heck that means—to craft his memorable covers.

JIM LEE

CURRENT GIG DC's *Batman*

CLAIM TO FAME The WildStorm head honcho rose to superstardom with the launch of the *X-Men* title in 1991 to record sales figures. He then helped revolutionize the industry as a co-founder of Image Comics. His return to regular penciling on the *Batman* arc "Hush" in 2002-03 etched his name in history among the artistic elite

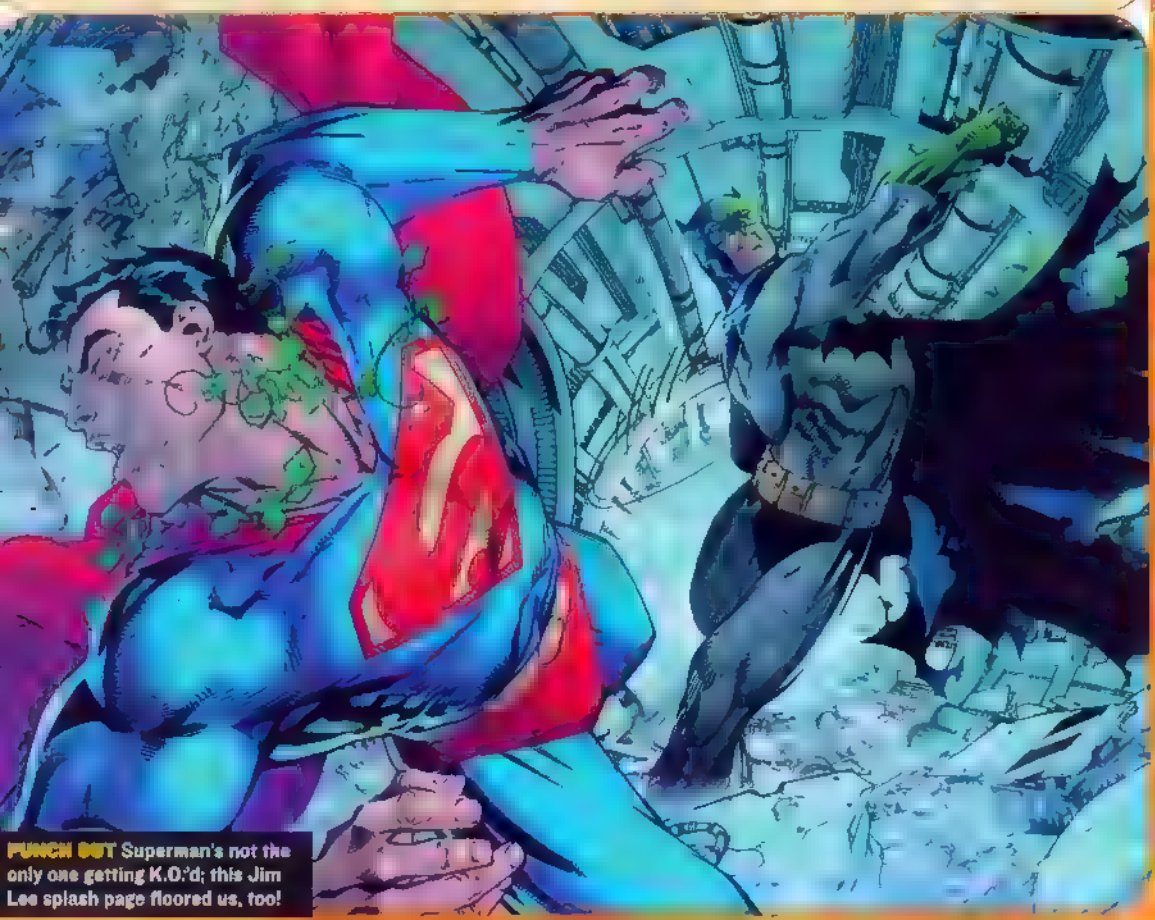
FIRST APPEARANCE: "For the majors, it would be *Alpha Flight* #51 [in 1987]," says Lee, "but I also did finishes on a little-known project called *Samurai Santa* in 1986, which was the first actual published work. I don't have a copy of *Samurai* myself, but people bring them up at shows. I'm thinking of buying up all the copies and destroying them!"

TRAINING: "I'm mostly self-taught. I've checked out lots of books from the library: George Bridgman's *Complete Guide to Drawing From Life*, Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art*, even Marvel's *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way*, because you need to have a basic understanding of the way the parts of the human body interact with one another three-dimensionally."

FAVORITE WORK OF HIS OWN: "Over the 14 years I've been in the business, I feel I've produced maybe three or four images that I'm *really* pleased with. The cover to *Uncanny X-Men* #268, with Captain America and Black Widow. There's an X-Men wanted poster image that has Wolverine, Cable and Archangel which was more technically proficient than anything else I did at the time. The image of Batman choking the Joker [title page to *Batman* #614]. There's also a shot of Namor sitting on a big seashell with the crown jewels on display [in *Fantastic Four* (vol. 2) #2], more in terms of the power and emotion conveyed in his gesture. I think I'm capable of producing a certain level of work, and every now and then I surprise myself and produce something that makes me think, 'Wow, I don't know how that happened!'"

DESCRIBES HIS STYLE AS: "Hyper-realistic figures, contorted and exaggerated to create maximum energy and impact!"

MAKING A SPLASH "Splash pages are a challenge. Double-page spreads are an unusual shape to fill, and it really limits you to a panoramic shot. The nice thing about a single splash page is that you've got room to do a figure standing. On a double-page spread, your figures tend to be smaller. It's like a widescreen shot in a movie. Plus, you have to deal with the gutter—you can't put anything important in the center, like faces or boobs [*laughs*], or it may get scrunched by the fold. The best splashes are the simple ones, with one or two characters, at most three. It's easiest to structure the three characters standing up on a single-page splash."



PUNCH OUT Superman's not the only one getting K.O.'d; this Jim Lee splash page floored us, too!

JIM LEE

"Believe it or not, the best fight scenes are the ones that incorporate the theory of mimes," says Lee. "When you mime, you want to create the illusion of weight and force through the position of your joints and the degree of stress on your muscles. And when you draw people in action, you want to create the illusion that they're under great stress, force or resistance as they move against one another. And that requires you to understand how joints interrelate, how muscles deal with stress and where the limbs fall. I think of that a lot when I do action. I also try to imagine it all happening in real time, three-dimensionally and spatially, and I'll try to move my mind's eye around the figures for the coolest angle. And if that fails, I'll grab a friend and have them pose, just for the fun of watching them get into all sorts of strange and funky poses!"

MORTAL COMBAT Jim Lee knows more about staging a fight than Don King!

BEST STORYTELLER

MARK BAGLEY

RRENT GIG: Marvel's *Ultimate Spider-Man*

LAIM TO FAME: Bagley's 60-plus-issue run on *Amazing Spider-Man* defined the Web-head for a new generation of fans, and his work on *New Warriors* and *Thunderbolts* further solidified his status as one of Marvel's go-to guys—all of which led to his snagging the coveted *Ultimate Spider-Man* gig with Brian Michael Bendis.

T APPEARANCE: "An issue of *Nightmask* from the New Universe," laughs Bagley. "I don't even remember the number! But it must have been 17 or 18 years ago." [It was issue #9 from 1987.]

AVORITE WORK OF HIS OWN: "I guess I'd have to say the *Spider-Man and Batman* one-shot that I did, because it was just such a cool story!"

ESCRIBES HIS STYLE AS: "Accessible. Or approachable. Very clean. I think. I'm not looking to chase people away by being too over the top. There are a whole lot of guys who can draw rings around me, but I pride myself on being a really good storyteller. Visually, there are different types of storytellers, but I think the way I do it appeals across a really wide spectrum. It definitely showcases the story, because I always keep the story mainly in mind when I'm working. I'm not up there trying to show off what I do—I'm trying to show off the story. And in the end, it *does* show off what I do, if I've done my job right."

WHAT'S IN A STORY: "Because comics are such a visual medium, you *can* get away with just really pretty pictures," says Bagley. "But I think that can get boring after a while. Unless it's a phenomenal artist, hardly anybody picks up a book just to look at the artwork. There has to be something behind it. You've got to have more meat in there, and the meat is the storytelling. The storytelling conveys the emotion and perfectly illustrates why comics are so much more than just a simple painted picture."

Big time super hero
Maybe you should take a class or something.
A class?
Like a Kung-Fu class. Get some, I don't know—some moves.
I was thinking that. Ow!
But this is really this guy, this really turns me out!
Why would he say that?
He knows that this Doctor guy with the arms is after him. He knows that!
Why would he blame it on me? What did I do? I tried to help. Hello?? I tried to help?
There's a cycle beginning here of me trying to help, me getting my butt kicked up and down the street,
and me trying to figure out what went wrong while the news has a field day.
It's a cycle and I...I hate it.
No one does this crap to Captain America—
or Iron Man—
just me!!
Every time!!
Maybe it's the costume.
What?
You asked me for reasons.
You don't like the costume.
Never mind.
Have you seen Daredevil's costume?
He looks like a complete fool and nobody blames nuclear sabotage on him.

STORY TIME Mark Bagley's art reveals tons of character layers and never gets bogged down with overly flashy panels.

ADAM HUGHES

Top Cow's *Tomb Raider*, DC's *Wonder Woman* Hot chicks. 'Nuff said! Hughes made a name for himself as the premier "good girl" artist in comics with a plethora of gorgeous pin-ups and beautiful covers for books like *Wonder Woman*, *Justice League America* and the *Just Imagine Stan Lee Creating...* series.

"A pin-up in *Eagle* #6 for Crystal Comics, back in 1987," reveals Hughes. "I *drove* past a college once [*laughs*]. It looked really expensive, so I didn't end up going. I realized that all I needed was pornography and the Internet to get started. So that boils down to: I was self-taught."

"My *Wonder Woman* covers. I just feel like I've had the most time, opportunity and creative freedom to explore my craft on that gig."

"Not as offensive as others!" Hughes' style stresses clean lines over excessive cross-hatching, with much of his recent work sporting the painted look—courtesy of Photoshop magic.

"It doesn't matter whether you're pushing *Playboy* or Post Grape-Nuts—sex sells. If you've got something attractive on what you're producing, that's always better than having something unattractive. Unfortunately, comics are mostly read by males, and the majority of the males reading them tend to like hot chicks. Of course, that doesn't mean you should turn around and make Aunt May a hot chick [*laughs*], but when it's appropriate, it's always to be encouraged."

SEX APPEAL An Adam Hughes drawing is as close to real sex as some fanboys will ever get.

BEST ATTENTION TO DETAIL

BRYAN HITCH

CURRENT GIG Marvel's *The Ultimates*

CLAIM TO FAME: Pay attention—'cuz Bryan Hitch certainly does. After cutting his teeth on Marvel U.K. books like *Action Force* and *Transformers*, Hitch burst onto the scene in 1998 with *Stormwatch*, followed by his critically acclaimed run on *The Authority*. Fans latched onto his hyper-detailed style, and after a brief stint on *JLA* with Mark Waid, Hitch teamed with Mark Millar to launch the fan-favorite *The Ultimates*.

FIRST APPEARANCE: "My first comic was *Action Force* #32," reveals Hitch. "Marvel U.K. was producing weekly comics based on toy lines like *Thundercats*, *Transformers* and *G.I. Joe* (*Action Force*), and I got my first commission when I was 16 and haven't been out of work since. I may have had my ups and downs, but I've been very lucky and never lacked work when friends and colleagues, many of whose work I consider better than mine, have struggled to find a job."

TRAINING: "Absolutely bugger all, mate."

FAVORITE WORK OF HIS OWN: "I'm not really that keen on my own stuff as I only ever see the flaws. That said, I am very proud of *The Authority* as a whole and what it led to, and very pleased with the way my work is developing on *The Ultimates*."

DESCRIBES HIS STYLE AS: "Realistic line work, cinematic pacing and labor intensive."

DETAILS, DETAILS: "I try to invest my work with a sense of verisimilitude so that anyone reading it will believe in the conviction of the story. I'm sick of the 'it's only comics' argument and believe that it's as valid a medium for delivering rollicking action-adventure stories as TV or cinema. Adding details fleshes out the characters and the environments they exist in. It's the difference between 'Sunset Beach' and 'Dallas,' Roger Corman and George Lucas, Hershey's and Cadbury's, Britney Spears and Madonna. Did I just say 'rollicking?'"

DETAIL ORIENTED Bryan Hitch's work is so detailed, we often find city scum on our shoes after perusing New York City scenes like this one from *The Ultimates*.

KEVIN MAGUIRE

DC's *Formerly Known as the Justice League*

He's known as the artist of 1,000 faces, thanks to his hard-earned reputation for endowing his characters with ridiculously expressive mugs. His most popular work was his career-opening run on *Justice League* (vol. 2) in the late '80s.

"Apart from some Marvel Universe pin-ups and a *Power Man/Iron Fist* cover, my first published work was *Justice League* (vol. 2) #1," confirms Maguire.

"No real artistic training, per se, beyond incessant doodling in the back rows of my high school classes [*laughs*]. Otherwise, I credit my acting and improv training with my facial expression success."

"I'm critical of everything I've done, but I guess the stuff I'm least critical of is *Adventures of Captain America* #1 and the *FF/Gen*[13] crossover. Though I attribute my satisfaction with that to Karl Story's inking."

"Panels and panels of characters with scrunched up, rubbery faces!"

"I've always looked at the characters as actors. The better an actor is, the more wrapped up you get in what's happening to them. Facial expressions and body language is the way to portray what they're going through internally, which should be as important as what's happening externally. It's another layer of storytelling."

FACE VALUE Kevin Maguire's rubbery facial expressions reveal each character's inner feelings to strengthen the story.

ALEX ROSS

CURRENT GIG: DC's *JLA: Liberty and Justice*

CLAIM TO FAME: Ross blew away the industry with his photo-realistic portrayal of superheroes in the real world in 1993's *Marvels*. Three years later, the painter hit the jackpot again with DC's futuristic epic, *Kingdom Come*. Since then, Ross has maintained his superstar status with a steady stream of highly successful projects—the latest being the upcoming oversized graphic novel, *JLA: Liberty and Justice*.

FIRST APPEARANCE: "Now Comics' *Terminator: The Burning Earth* from 1989-90," says Ross. "I was 19 years old at the time!"

FAVORITE WORK OF HIS OWN: "I'll just say *Uncle Sam*—might as well throw people off! If I said *Kingdom Come*, people would say, 'Oh, I have that!' And I need to sell more *Uncle Sams*."

DESCRIBES HIS STYLE AS: "'Illusion made reality' I'm basically doing a realistic interpretation of fantasy material, placing it in a real-looking world with real-looking characters. From a painting perspective, I guess my art does resemble the nickname I've been given: the Norman Rockwell of comics. There's probably plenty of other illustrators I can be compared to, but that seems to be the name people want to use. So be it."

REFERENCE DESK Alex Ross uses plenty of friends and family as reference for his paintings—and they don't even get paid scale!

DETAILS, DETAILS: "I always want it to be a case of, when you see a character I've drawn—especially a well-known, iconic character—that from shot to shot, it's distinctly one human being. It's not so generic that one head could be exchanged for another. If you have two blond guys standing next to each other, like Captain America with his mask off and Aquaman, you should be able to tell the difference, that they're two entirely different people. I still use models for all of my paintings, because I want to continue to be influenced and guided by what real life says. It's important for the final product to have that feel, that it seems very vivid and very realistic."

PAT LEE

Dreamwave's *Transformers: Generation One*, *Devil May Cry*

Say hello to the man who brought the Transformers back to life. Dreamwave's co-founder and head honcho thrilled fans with his manga-influenced art on books like *Darkminds*—but it's his dynamic and stylized take on the classic robots of Transformers that nets him the title of the undisputed champion of tech.

"It was a book called *Target* for a small company named Culture Comics," revealed Lee. "It was *definitely* a learning experience!"

"Definitely the stuff I'm working on for my new project. I'm doing a lot of new things with my artwork and I'm putting a lot of time and effort into developing my personal style, finding new ways to make my art come to life."

"Japanese anime, manga-esque, deep and detailed."

"Drawing technologically complex things is something you really have to get used to. For *Transformers*, it took weeks for me to adjust to drawing them—but eventually I got used to doing them fairly quickly. The complexity lies in the intricate detail and precision. Each curve, block and line has to make sense, and they have to universally connect with one another to make the shapes look good. The best things to use for spaceship reference are actual pictures, which you adapt as an illustrator. For robots? Just give me an old Japanese Transformers book with a ton of artwork sprinkled throughout!"

MONSTER GARAGE Pat Lee takes his tech seriously, rendering every nut, bolt and fan belt.

TIM TOWNSEND

CURRENT GIG Marvel's *New X-Men*

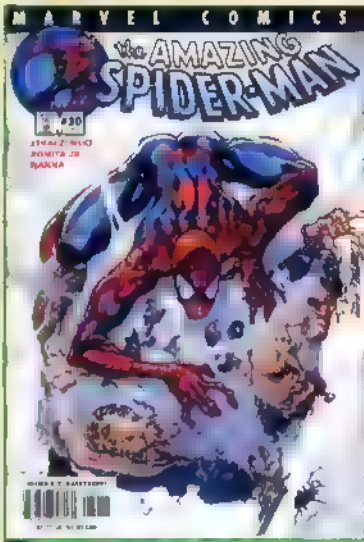
CAREER CHANGE The inker extraordinaire kick-started his career by inking Joe Madureira's groundbreaking run on *Uncanny X-Men*, and it's been nothing but high-profile gigs ever since. After teaming with Chris Bachalo on *Uncanny X-Men* and Art Adams on *The Authority*, Townsend recently returned to the X-Universe to reteam with Bachalo on *New X-Men*.

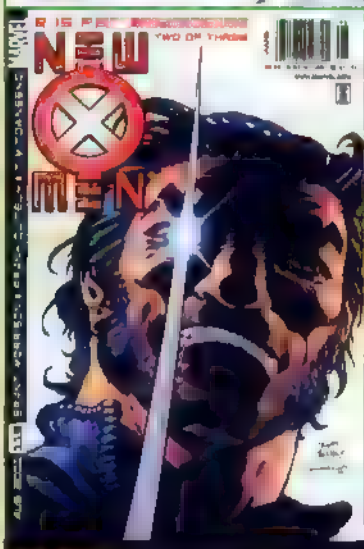
FIRST APPEAR-ANCE "When I was in college back in '91, I did a book for AC Comics," confesses Townsend. "They did a *Fem Force* mini series called *Paragon: Dark Apocalypse* which I actually penciled an issue of. Ooh, God, it's horrible stuff."

TRAINING "I went to art school at the University of Central Florida, where I majored in drawing. I tell people I have my BSA because I was about three weeks shy of it when I got my first job offer in California. That's when I bailed and went to work for Image!"

STYLE "Sort of slick and anal retentive [*laughs*]. Though I like to think of myself as not having a set style. I don't ink any two pencilers the same way. I don't have any idea in my mind of how things should necessarily be. As far as I'm concerned, my ultimate goal is to finish the penciler's sentence, while still making it fun for me. I ink with nib, I ink with brush—whatever I have to do to achieve the penciler's image."

INKING THE DEAD "The respect [for inkers] has always been there on the part of pencilers, and there are a lot of good editors that really appreciate good inks. So there's always going to be a job for inkers in comics. 'Cuz hey, they need us!"





INK WELL? Tim Townsend's one sought-after inker, having worked with Joe Madureira, J. Scott Campbell, Frank Quitely and Chris Bachalo.

BEST COLORIST (COVERS)

RICHARD ISANOVE

COVER MODEL Richard Isanove's colors on *Origin* and the upcoming *I602* have set a new standard for covers.

[redacted] Marvel's *I602*

[redacted] After perfecting his skills at Top Cow during the studio's early years, the French-born colorist exploded into stardom with his moody colors on *Daredevil*, *Ultimate X-Men* and *Origin*.

[redacted] *CyberForce Origins: Stryker*

[redacted] "Now, it's *I602*. But I've been very fortunate, because coloring *Origin* has really changed things for me," notes Isanove. "Creators are really starting to appreciate the work of colorists, and Marvel has actually started reorganizing things so that we get more credit and recognition."

[redacted] "I try to mix elements of painting with computer techniques and hope that people won't be able to tell where one starts and one ends."

"A really great cover grabs your attention on the rack and ensures a coherence from one issue to the next. In France, they used to take American covers and turn them into paintings. I was 7 years old when I saw a cover on the shelf, showing Spidey and DD jumping aside with Namor in the background throwing a tree at them, painted from a Gene Colan drawing. My dad asked me repeatedly if I was sure that was the comic I wanted to get, and I remember it was the only thing I could see in the whole store!"

BEST COLORIST (INTERIORS)

JUSTIN PONSOR

[redacted] CrossGen's *Sojourn*

[redacted] One of CrossGen's rising star artists, Ponsor has turned heads with his incredibly subtle colors on the visually stunning *Sojourn*.

[redacted] "I actually don't remember the name of the series now, but it was issue #3 of *Team 7: Dead Reckoning* by WildStorm," says Ponsor. "I only did a few of the pages, but I'll tell you right now that they probably aren't the good ones!"

[redacted] "Whimsical? Friendly? I'm guilty of shifting techniques based on my impulsiveness and restlessness. I get tired of doing the same thing all the time, and it's fun to try things out stylistically—to experiment and see what works and what doesn't."

[redacted] "Color can make the difference between looking like a movie-in-print and a kid's funnybook. There are still lots of people who really don't know what it is we do—an episode of 'The Simpsons' cracked on that fact once with a 'coloring button,'—and that's kind of the general perception, that we push a button and it's done. People are starting to be more enlightened, but there's still a big group of talented colorists who've yet to be recognized for their work. A groundbreaking step for us was when Laura Dupuy got listed on *The Authority* covers and Jeromy Cox on *Leave it to Chance*. People finally started to notice that we weren't robots."

LUSH LIFE Justin Ponsor's photo-realistic colors on *Sojourn* leave readers with eyes popping and tongues wagging.

X-WHO? For a complete list of each of the X-characters above and which storyline they came from, check out www.wizarduniverse.com.

TOP 100 X-MEN COMICS EVER!

THE X-MEN ISSUES YOU HAVE TO OWN, FROM 'DARK PHOENIX' TO DAZZLER

BY THE WIZARD STAFF

ORIGINAL OPENING ART BY ADAM KUBERT AND DANNY MIKI

Get ready for the REAL "X-Men United."

Trying to narrow down 40 years of X-Men continuity to just 100 single issues may seem like a one-sided battle (the equivalent of say, Artie and Leech taking on the Wendigo), but *Wizard* has delved through hundreds of regular, spin-off, limited series and guest-appearance issues to select the 100 X-Men comics (broken up into nine different categories) that are essential to any comic fan's collection.

Many of the issues contained within have gone on to near-mythic comic status as some of the greatest stories ever told (such as "The Dark Phoenix Saga"), others have influenced major motion pictures (*God Loves, Man Kills*) and still others have left actual tears in the eyes of readers (*Uncanny X-Men* #390). And hey, others just make us laugh at their pure ridiculousness!

When compiling the 100 X-issues, a little repetition was a necessary evil. You'll notice that the cover to *Uncanny X-Men* #141 appears on two separate occasions due to its success on multiple levels. the issue boasts both an amazing cover and a landmark story contained within. But don't worry about getting shortchanged—there are at least 100 different issues when complete storylines are accounted for. We've even added the Near Mint values for all of the issues!

Think you're an ultimate X-fan who has all of the X-ssentials? Then read on to see what issues you've gotta track down!

10 BEST COVERS

10. X-MEN #1

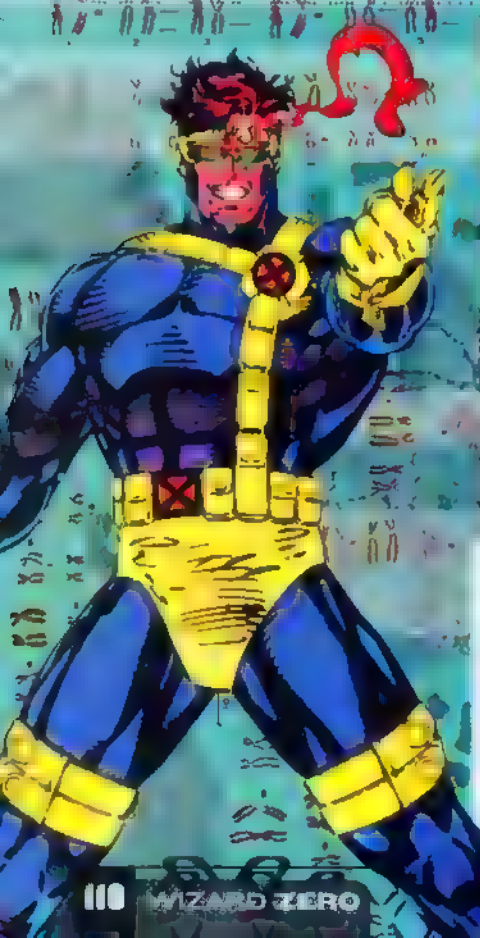
Forty years of history have come and gone, and only one man has kept pace with Xavier's mutants—Magneto. So when Chris Claremont and Jim Lee launched *X-Men* in 1991, who better to stick on the cover? Lee's powerful depiction portrays the villain in all of his magnetic glory, and the menacing pose—with the entire X-team bearing down on him—was an instant classic. **NM Value: $4.50**

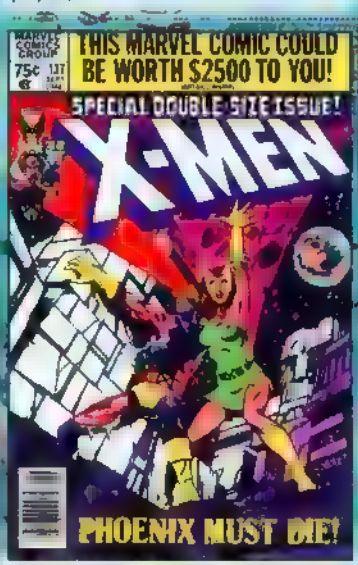
9. UNCANNY X-MEN #1

Feast your eyes on the birth of a franchise! Jack "King" Kirby's famous cover depicts the Children of the Atom during their first adventure, pitted in battle against Magneto. The piece also accomplishes a rare feat—each of the original X-Men are shown using their powers at the same time! And check out that steel pole Angel is brandishing—that's hardcore! **NM Value: $10,500**

8. NEW X-MEN #116

That pout, that pose...that *gravity-defying outfit*. This knockout cover by Frank Quitely proves that the White Queen doesn't need telepathy to capture the attention of drooling fanboys everywhere. Flashing a sassy attitude, the cover drips with enough sex appeal to send us running for a cold shower. And we all know Emma's got the sass to back up the ass! **NM Value: $3.50**





7. UNCANNY X-MEN #137

John Byrne's done his share of classic X-covers—but this one puts the finishing touches on one of the most enduring X-tales of all time. Cyclops and Jean, tattered and weary, fight against impossible odds on the cover to the final chapter of the "Dark Phoenix Saga." The battle between the X-Men and the Shi'ar delivers one of the most touching death scenes ever witnessed! **NM Value: $75**

6. WOLVERINE #1 (MINI)

Don't get too close to this cover—you might just get hurt! Frank Miller's striking image of a maskless Logan is enough to send any timid reader running. Thankfully, it's the masked warriors of Clan Yashida that Wolvie's looking to slice in this classic mini-series. Wolverine proves once and for all that he's the best there is at what he does...and he looks damned badass while doing it. **NM Value: $60**

5. UNCANNY X-MEN #251

The first rule of great X-covers: Simplicity rules. That's why this Marc Silvestri image stands out as one of the most haunting cover images of all time. The sight of Wolverine crucified on a huge wooden X (representing the plight of mutants) after a violent run-in with the Reavers makes us wince every time, and the dark shades of purple and gray add to the mood of doom and gloom. **NM Value: $10**

4. UNCANNY X-MEN #56

Not content with toying with the tiny X-Men at his feet, the Living Pharaoh reaches for a bigger prize in this vintage Neal Adams cover. That's right, that's the *logo* he's crunching in his big grabby hands, looking as if he's going to squish the X-Men with it! This is the first time *ever* a character interacts with a logo on a comic book cover. The very first time! How's that for breaking down barriers? **NM Value: $100**

3. GIANT-SIZE X-MEN #1

Out with the old, in with the new! The brand-new X-team literally tears through this cover by the legendary Gil Kane and Dave Cockrum. With the original X-Men held captive by the mutant island Krakoa, Professor X summons reinforcements in this pivotal issue that introduces new recruits like Storm, Nightcrawler and Wolverine. Who says size doesn't matter? **NM Value: $1,000**

2. UNCANNY X-MEN #142

Poor Wolvie...doesn't it seem like he gets put through the ringer every other month? This Terry Austin cover stands out not only because of the brutal incineration of Wolverine, claws extended, by the deadly blast of that emotionless Sentinel, but also for the kickass tagline: "This Issue: Everybody Dies!" How can you *not* pick up a book with that kind of promise up front? **NM Value: $60**

1. UNCANNY X-MEN #141

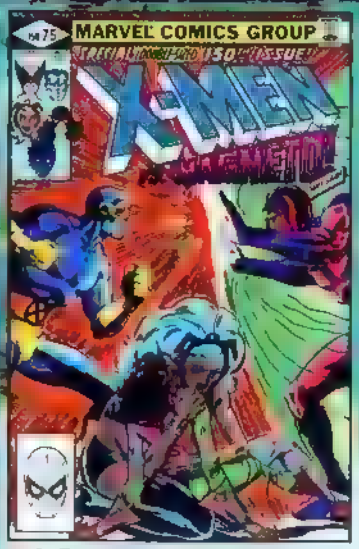
Alternate realities don't get any bleaker—and cover images don't get any cooler. The acclaimed "Days of Future Past" storyline treated readers to a grim vision of the X-Men's future, a mood perfectly captured by the first issue's John Byrne and Terry Austin cover. The Sentinel searchlight perfectly frames the mutant "Wanted" poster (which informs readers that the majority of the team is dead!), as well as a defiant Logan and Kitty as they stare down the death machine that's looking to add their names to the "slain" list. **NM Value: $65**

■ RICHARD HO

10 ESSENTIAL STORIES

10. KIDNAPPED!

Dr. Doom doesn't take kindly to uninvited guests. So when the X-Men storm his castle to foil a blackmail plot organized by Arcade in *Uncanny X-Men* #145-#147, the ruler of Latveria responds with an iron fist. Taking advantage of Storm's claustrophobia, Doom seals her in crystal, but Storm conjures a devastating weather disturbance before Doom gets his helmet handed to him. **NM Value: $15 apiece**



9. I, MAGNETO...

Think the X-Men rely too much on their powers? Think again, as the powerless heroes overcome a mutant inhibitor field to defeat Magneto's latest plot against humanity in *Uncanny* #150. The X-Men's arch-nemesis threatens the nations of the world with a device that can trigger disruptions in the earth's crust—and with their powers stripped, the team has to rely on other abilities. **NM Value: $15**

8. AND HELLFIRE IS THEIR NAME

This is the spark that lit the Dark Phoenix fuse. Jean's psychic manipulation at the hands of Mastermind in *Uncanny* #132-#134 launches the X-Men into a classic confrontation with the Hellfire Club—a struggle that sees Jean's transformation into the Black Queen. Though the X-Men triumph, the full power of the Phoenix force is unleashed, resulting in the birth of Dark Phoenix. **NM Value: $60 apiece**

7. GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

Hatred has a new name, and that name is William Stryker. Chris Claremont's disturbing graphic novel of prejudice and persecution marked the debut of the fanatical Reverend Stryker. Stryker preaches that mutants are an affront to God, and the X-Men not only have to foil his plot to turn Professor X into the ultimate mutant-killing machine, but reverse his manipulation of the media. **NM Value: $25**

6. RETURN TO WEAPON X

Government work can be a killer. Just ask the X-Men, who become the unlucky targets of a Weapon X recruiting drive in *Ultimate X-Men* #7-#12. The covert division of S.H.I.E.L.D. kidnaps mutants and forces them to be soldiers in a superhuman special ops unit, and it's up to former Weapon X'er Wolverine—with some help from Nick Fury and the Brotherhood—to spring his teammates. **NM Value: $5-$15**

LIKE THESE STORIES? WANNA OWN 'EM? THEN TURN TO P. 32!

5. THE BROOD SAGA

The X-Men take to the stars in *Uncanny* #162-#167's battle royale against the Brood. The bug-like aliens infect each X-Man with an egg that threatens to transform the host into a slimy copy of the Brood queen. With the help of Carol Danvers, Lilandra and the Starjammers, the X-Men rid themselves of the parasites, putting an end to the Brood's intergalactic reign of terror in the process. **NM Value: $15-$20**

4. THE POWER OF PROTEUS

Reality bites. Especially when it's at the mercy of Proteus, the psychotic mutant who distorts reality at his whim. When Proteus escapes from his containment cell on Muir Island in *Uncanny* #126-#128, the X-Men must put him down for good. But the body-jumping villain leads our heroes on an epic chase across Scotland before Colossus scatters his life energies in a cataclysmic battle. **NM Value: $60 apiece**

3. DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

The past meets the future in a truly timeless tale. *Uncanny* #141-#142 introduced a bleak future ruled by Sentinels, where mutants have been nearly exterminated. The survivors of the mutant resistance send Katherine Pryde back in time to prevent their reality from coming to pass, and the future versions of Wolverine, Storm and Colossus sacrifice themselves to give her a fighting chance. **NM Value: $60-$85**

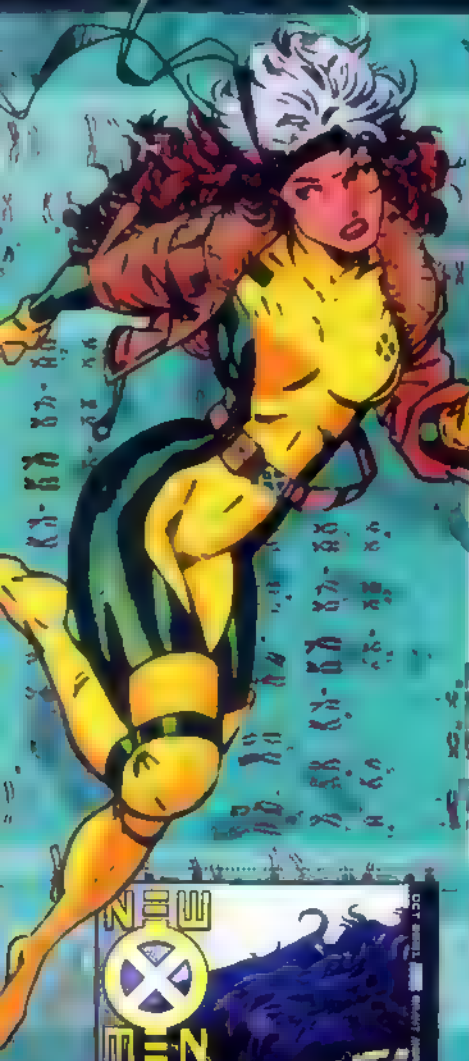
2. E IS FOR EXTINCTION

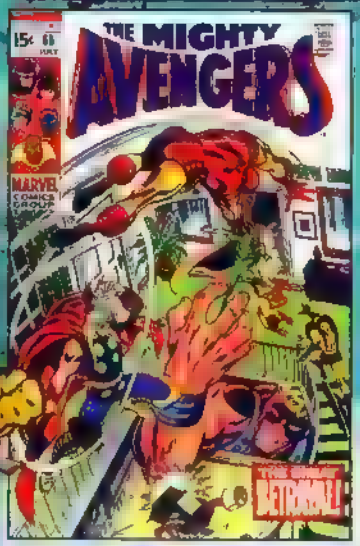
The X-Universe gets a kick in the pants courtesy of Grant Morrison's first explosive arc. With *New X-Men* #114-#116, a series of earth-shattering events rock the X-Men's world—the introduction of the maniacal Cassandra Nova, the utter destruction of Genosha by a fleet of adaptive Sentinels and the outing of the X-Men as mutants to the public, to name a few. **NM Value: $3.50-$8**

1. THE DARK PHOENIX SAGA

Cosmic heights, tragic lows and undying love...no wonder why *Uncanny* #135-#137 is considered the greatest X-Men story of all time. The final three issues of "The Dark Phoenix Saga" by Chris Claremont and John Byrne find Jean Grey standing trial for the destruction of an entire solar system, and the X-Men must battle the Shi'ar Imperial Guard for her life. In the midst of an epic battle on the moon, Jean sacrifices herself so that the universe can be free of the destructive power of the Phoenix—but she leaves behind a heartbroken team of mutants in the process. **NM Value $60-$75** ■ **RH**

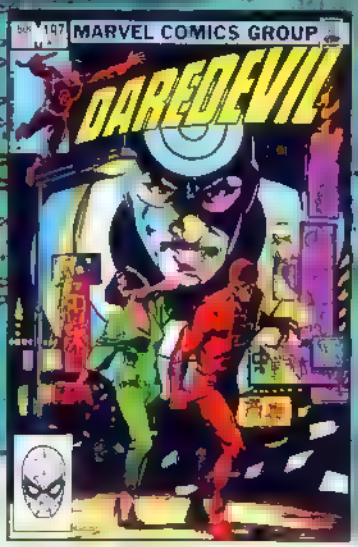
10 FAMOUS FIRSTS





ADAMANTIUM

Although it's famous for coating Wolverine's skeleton, the metal adamantium first appeared in ***Avengers #66***. In this story from writer Roy Thomas and artist Barry Windsor-Smith, S.H.I.E.L.D invites the Avengers aboard their Helicarrier to find out just how strong the metal is. Thor and Iron Man can't even dent it, so it's a good thing Wolverine plays for the home team. **NM Value: $35**



LADY DEATHSTRIKE

Writer Denny O'Neil had Lady Deathstrike sharing a bowl of rice with Daredevil long before Chris Claremont had her slashing Wolverine. To DD's credit, Yuriko Oyama had not yet become the savage killer known as Lady Deathstrike in ***DD #197***. Yuriko was still an innocent young girl who had been warped by her father's machinations and bore the scars of his malevolence on her cheek. **NM Value: $7.50**

BEAK

With the face not even a mother could love, the impeccable Beak (get it?) pops up for the first time in ***New X-Men #117***. Things get horrendously ugly when Cassandra Nova takes control of Beak and forces him to Sammy Sosa the Beast with a Louisville Slugger. Beak will be a major player in the upcoming arc penciled by Marc Silvestri, so pick up this book now! **NM Value: $3.50**

BANSHEE

Sean Cassidy has been a lot of things: head of the X-Corps, teacher for Generation X, Interpol agent, detective, X-Man, and for a short time, even a criminal! While under control of the mysterious Factor Three in ***Uncanny X-Men #28***, Banshee used his sonic wail to help the villain Ogre kidnap Professor X. Luckily, the X-Men had a secret weapon to stop him—earplugs! **NM Value: $200**

KITTY PRYDE/WHITE QUEEN

Chris Claremont brought two new females to the pages of ***Uncanny #129*** one a naive 13-year-old name Kitty Pryde, the other a frigid witch named Emma Frost, a.k.a. the White Queen. The introduction of Kitty paved the way for the creation of the New Mutants, while the White Queen was the first *femme fatale* the X-Men squared off against, but proved to be just too cool to remain a villain. **NM Value: $75**

FURRY BEAST

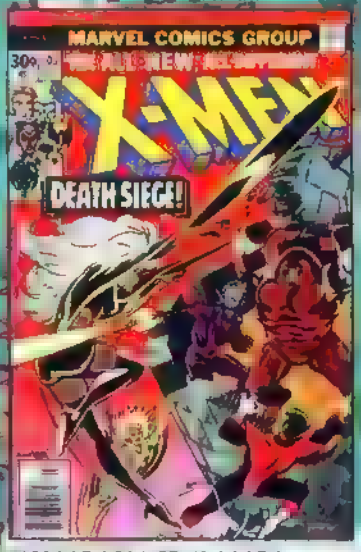
After completing his doctorate at Xavier's school, Hank McCoy worked at the Brand Corporation and synthesized a serum for activating latent mutations. Though a brilliant scientist, McCoy had a "Dumb and Dumber" moment in ***Amazing Adventures*** #11 when he guzzled the serum himself and triggered a secondary mutation giving him fur, sharp canine teeth and even greater strength and agility. **NM Value: $4**

MYSTIQUE

Raven Darkholme first turned up in ***Ms. Marvel*** #16, but she didn't appear as the devious blue-skinned shape-shifter Mystique until two issues later in ***Ms. Marvel*** #18. Using her human identity, Mystique infiltrated the Pentagon and S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Helicarrier with the intention of stealing hi-tech weaponry, but first she had to eliminate Ms. Marvel to keep her from interfering. **NM Value: $16**

ROGUE

Rogue may look and talk like a southern belle, but she wasn't always "sugah" and spice. Before she joined the X-Men, she was fighting alongside the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants and thrashed the Avengers all by herself in the Claremont-written ***Avengers Annual*** #10. She had the combined powers of Thor, Ms. Marvel and Captain America to help her out. **NM Value: $30**



WOLVIE CALLED "LOGAN"

The name "Logan" was given to James Howlett, a.k.a. Wolverine, by a childhood friend, but the first person to call him that post-Weapon X was a Leprechaun named Padraic! While battling the Juggernaut and Black Tom Cassidy in ***Uncanny*** #103, Wolverine is shocked when the diminutive Irishman calls him by his "real" name, leaving Wolvie to respond that he "don't believe in Leprechauns." **NM Value: $75**

GAMBIT

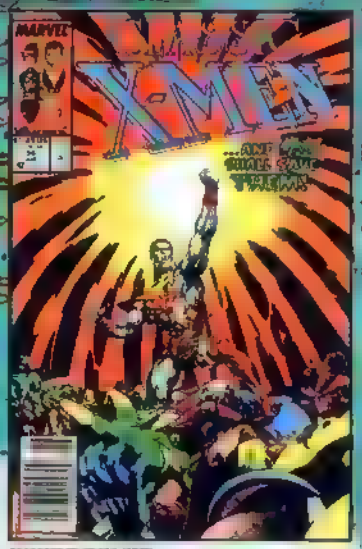
The fan-favorite Gambit has long played a key role in X-Men both good and bad. While his characteristic charm and somewhat duplicitous nature were present from the start, his powers were slightly varied with his first appearance in ***Uncanny*** #266. Rather than simply charging objects with his hand, he focused on them with his eyes, and he had not yet adopted the deck of playing cards as his weapon of choice. **NM Value: $50**

■ **TODD CASEY**

10 DEFINING X-MOMENTS

KITTY PRYDE

Kitty Pryde finds herself home alone on Christmas Eve in *Uncanny X-Men* #143 when the mansion is attacked by a powerful otherworldly entity. Kitty tackles the N'Garai demon solo, leading it through a Danger Room gauntlet before finally frying it with the Blackbird's afterburners. The X-Men return to find Kitty victorious, and the youngest X-Man gets the best Christmas gift of all—respect! **NM Value: $50**



WHITE QUEEN

Sex equals power—and the White Queen is as powerful as they come. In *Classic X-Men* #34's back-up tale, Emma proves her dominance in a game of chess with Mastermind, which ends up being a battle of wits, deception and illusions. As she explains to a cowering Hellfire Club servant, sex is a weapon to be used in the war against men—and the White Queen is all about winning. **NM Value: $3**

ICEMAN

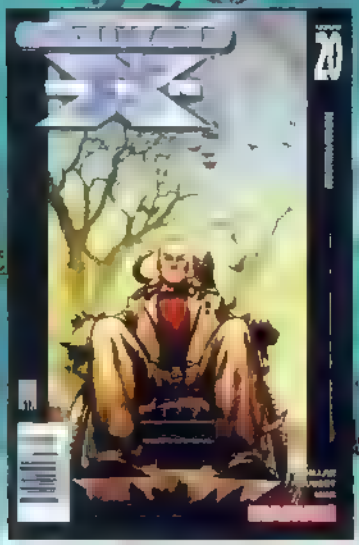
As *Ultimate War* #4 opens, the Ultimates have just neutralized Wolverine, Colossus and Storm. The battle is over...until Iceman puts the Ultimates on ice. With his teammates down, young Bobby Drake rides in on an icy wave that engulfs the entire city of New York! Usually playing the part of team prankster, the kid with ice in his veins proved just how powerful he can be. **NM Value: $3**

STORM

Sure, it's easy to be a badass when you can summon gale-force winds and bolts of lightning. But in this bloody knife fight with Callisto (*Uncanny* #170), the X-Men's leader proves that she can scrap with the best of them—even without her powers. With Angel's bachelor status hanging in the balance, Storm claims victory with a final stab to the heart. A bag o' wind, she ain't! **NM Value: $15**

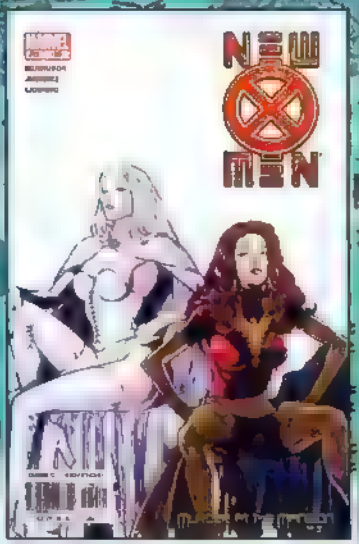
MYSTIQUE

The X-Men have the Danger Room—Mystique has Arcade, the master of deadly games. In *Uncanny* #177, Arcade designs a training sequence that pits the shape-shifter against robotic versions of the X-Men—and she slaughters them all! She slits Wolverine's throat, stabs Kitty and strangles Cyclops with ease. She even takes out Rogue, her own foster daughter, without batting an eye. **NM Value: $10**



PROFESSOR X

Even the world's most powerful telepath needs to do the occasional soul-searching. Professor Xavier decides to close his school in *Ultimate X-Men* #20's aftermath of the "World Tour" arc, which saw the death of his murderous son David and the near-death of Bobby Drake. The Professor nearly abandons his dream—until the kind words of a brainwashed Magneto force him to his senses. **NM Value: $3.50**

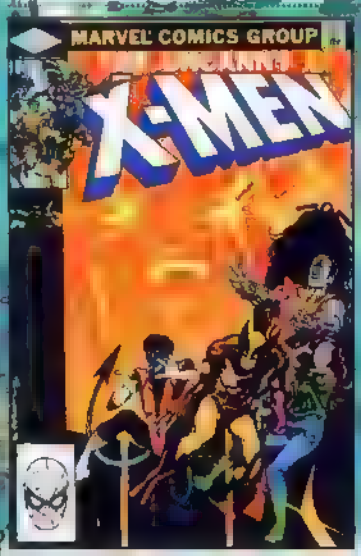


JEAN GREY

Jealousy's usually a green-eyed monster—but in *New X-Men* #139's case, it's a red-head. Emma Frost's seduction of Cyclops brings out the worst in Jean, as she unleashes the Phoenix force in a piercing attack that breaks through Emma's mental defenses. Once inside her mind, Jean shows off her dark streak, forcing Emma to relive her painful early years under her domineering father. **NM Value: $2.25**

CYCLOPS

The X Men's fearless leader must confront his fear of the past. In *Uncanny* #175, Mastermind tricks the X-Men into thinking that Dark Phoenix has returned. Even worse, the team's tricked into thinking that Cyclops is actually Dark Phoenix! Fighting off his teammates while trying to break the illusion, Cyclops uses all of his tactical skills to win—and accepts Jean's death in the process. **NM Value: $15**



NIGHTCRAWLER

A little faith goes a long way. Just ask the devout Kurt Wagner, whose strong Christian beliefs become a formidable weapon against Dracula in *Uncanny* #159. To break the vampire's hold over Storm, Kitty busts out a cross, which has no effect (she being Jewish and all). Wolverine has the same results (he being a professional killer and all). Luckily, Nightcrawler's devotion helps turn the tide. **NM Value: $15**

MAGNETO

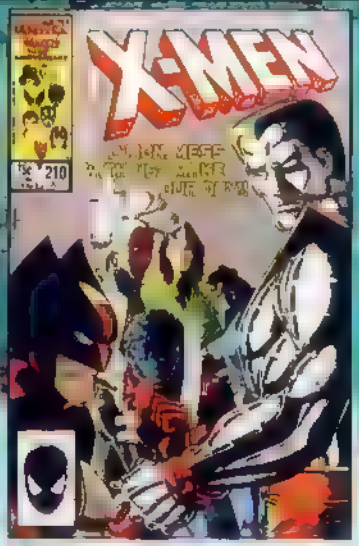
Magneto is one complicated supervillain. True, the X-Men's deadliest foe is willing to annihilate all of humanity to protect mutantkind, but he also shows flashes of reason and compassion in *X-Men* #53. Before launching his latest war against humanity, Mags wants to be sure he isn't making a mistake—so he hangs out with a construction worker, using him as a test to see if humanity is worth sparing. Of course, humanity fails the test, and the Magneto War engulfs the earth. But hey, at least he was nice enough to give us a shot, right? **NM Value: $3.25**

■ RH

10 BEST X-DEATHS

MARIKO

Wolverine has had many love interests than 007, but Mariko Yashida was the closest the wanton Canuck ever came to tying the knot. In *Wolverine* #57, Mariko accepts an offer from the Hand to buy out her clan in exchange for one of her fingers. The Hand tricks her into using a poisoned blade and as she lies dying, she begs Wolverine to give her a painless death, a last request he sorrowfully fulfills. **NM Value: $5**

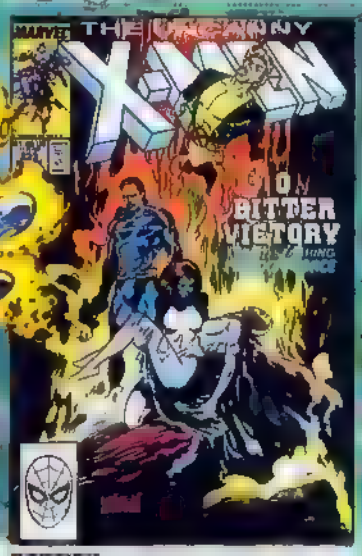


THE MORLOCKS

In *Uncanny X-Men* #210–#213 and *X-Factor* #9–#11, Mr. Sinister's Marauders invade the Manhattan sewers with one goal: the slaughter of the Morlocks. The act was so vile, it drove the stalwart Colossus to snap the Marauder Riptide's neck. The battle marked a turning point as the X-Men realized that dealing with increasingly deadly foes required more extreme methods. **NM Value: $3.50–$35**

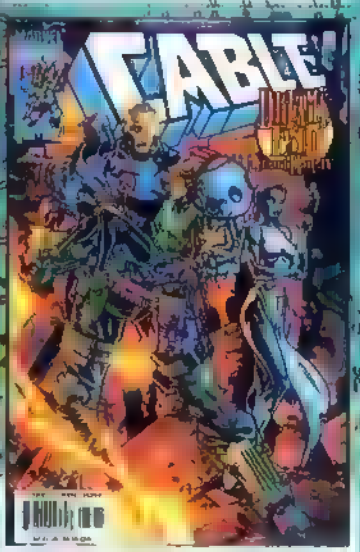
MIMIC

Emulating a foe's powers proved a valuable asset for Mimic, but it also proved to be his undoing. In *Incredible Hulk* #161, the Hulk feels his strength being sapped away and learns that Mimic is responsible. The two trade blows until Mimic absorbs too much of the Hulk's radiation and dies. Although he would eventually return, Mimic was the first in a long line of X-Men to fall in battle. **NM Value: $15**



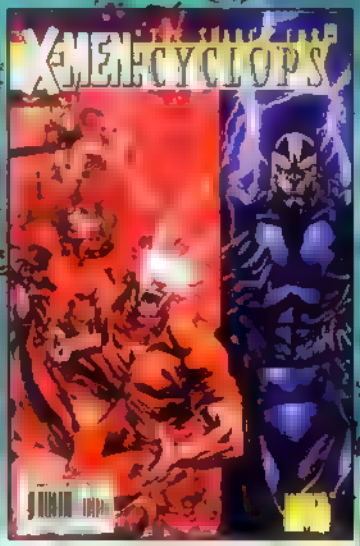
DESTINY

Even though Destiny's power allows her to see possible paths in the future, she was still unable (or unwilling) to try and save herself. In a melee between the Reavers and Freedom Force (*Uncanny* #255), Mystique loses track of Destiny just long enough for Legion to off her. Destiny left behind an esoteric diary, the existence of which spawned the X-Treme X-Men, who now attempt to decipher it. **NM Value: $10**



PYRO

While the Legacy Virus ravages his body, Pyro watches as mutants continue to kill one another in *Cable* #87. Post, Blob and Avalanche are moments away from assassinating Senator Kelly, a man they feared would wipe out the mutant populace. Pyro torches Post, saves Kelly and with his dying breath makes Kelly promise to help end the hatred between humans and mutants. **NM Value: $2.25**



APOCALYPSE

What happens when Cable finally gets the chance in *X-Men: The Search for Cyclops* #4 to kill Apocalypse? His momma does the job for him! As his aging body decays, Apocalypse settles on Nathan Grey as a new host. To save Nathan, Cyclops jumps in, but winds up with the villain's essence inside him. Jean Grey kills Apocalypse by tearing him from Scott's mind, but Scott is forever changed. **NM Value: $3**

SENATOR KELLY

In *X-Men* #108 the X-Men rush the dying Dr. Moira MacTaggert to the U.S. with the cure for the Legacy Virus locked in her head. Cable makes amends with longtime foe Senator Kelly, who is about to deliver a speech announcing a change in his anti-mutant platform. Before either the cure or mutant-human peace can be achieved, Moira dies and an assassin guns down Kelly. **NM Value: $4.50**

THUNDERBIRD

Thunderbird holds the morose distinction of being the first X-Man to die and remain dead. His attempt to prevent Count Nefaria from escaping (in *Uncanny* #95) works all too well when he causes Nefaria's plane to crash while still clutching onto it. Writer Chris Claremont and artist Dave Cockrum demonstrated that the lives of fans' favorite X-Men were at stake at any given point. **NM Value: $250**

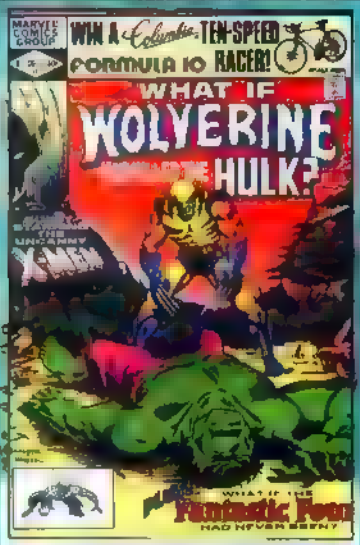
PSYLOCKE

Betsy Braddock was never one to back down from a challenge, which proved to be her undoing in *X-Treme X-Men* #2. The search for Destiny's diaries led Psylocke and her teammates to Valencia, where they encountered the evil Vargas. After seeing him take out Beast and Rogue with terrifying ease, Psylocke takes him on alone—a fatal mistake, as her psychic blade proved no match for his katana. **NM Value: $3**

COLOSSUS

Perhaps no other death remains so salient in the minds of X-fans than that of the beloved Colossus. In *Uncanny* #390, Hank McCoy finally synthesized a cure for the Legacy Virus, but there was one flaw in it. The serum needed to bond with the X-gene in order to be effective, meaning someone had to die for it to work. Peter Rasputin lost his sister Illyana to the virus and refused to allow anyone to suffer the same pain she did, injecting himself with the serum so that he could save countless lives at the cost of his own. **NM Value: $7 ■ TC**

TOP 10 WOLVERINE STORIES



10. WHAT IF WOLVERINE HAD KILLED THE HULK?

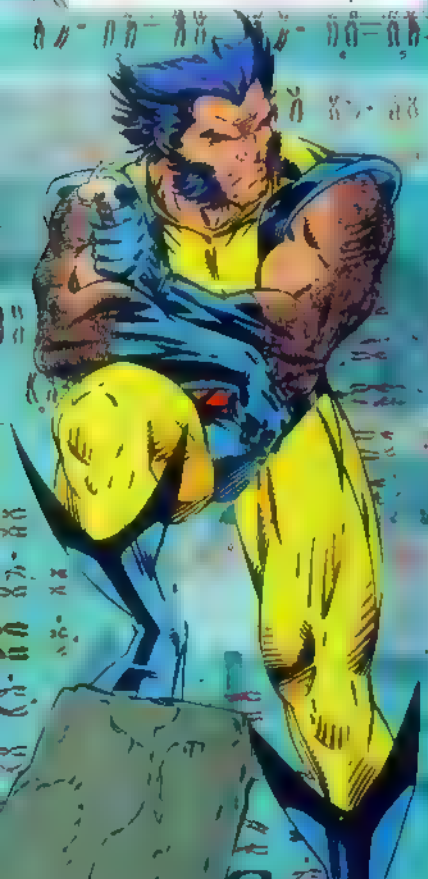
In *What If?* #31, Wolverine goes too far after a battle with the Wendigo and rips the Hulk apart. Things go downhill from there, as Wolvie flees from the Canadian government, joins Magneto's Brotherhood and infiltrates the X-Men—only to save his would-be teammates from Magneto's attack. Too bad he winds up killed by his own claws at the end! **NM Value: $13**

9. VICTIMS

Murder's in the air, and Wolverine is the chief suspect in ***Wolverine/Gambit: Victims*** **#1-#4**, an early tale from the Jeph Loeb/Tim Sale tandem. The bonds of team loyalty are stretched as Gambit chases the killer of a close friend in London. Will the Cajun clash with the Canuck? Or will they come to their senses in time to discover the villains pulling their strings? **NM Value: $3.25 apiece**

8. BLOODLUST

When nature calls, Wolverine's animal instincts answer. Only problem is, Logan is losing control of his berserker rages in this one-shot. In the Canadian wilderness, renegade members of a nature-loving alien race are on the rampage. In order to restore balance to the natural world, Wolvie must overcome his bloodlust and destroy the renegades—and not lose himself in the process. **NM Value: $6.25**

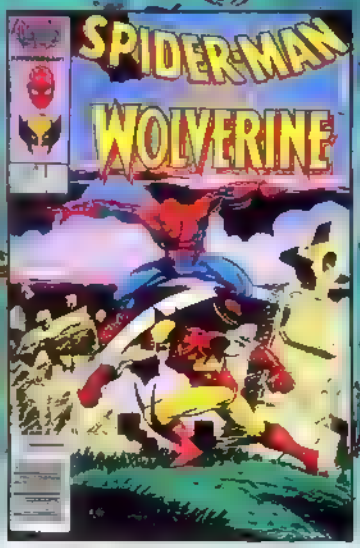


7. THE LAST RUN

Berserker rages are never far behind when Sabretooth and Wolverine get together—but in ***Uncanny X-Men*** **#212**, the fearless Canuck shows he's the bigger man. Rather than succumbing to mindless rage, Wolvie steers Sabretooth safely out of reach in order to protect a Morlock healer. Honoring his responsibilities as an X-Man, Wolvie proves that the inner hero controls the animal within. **NM Value: $30**

6. MADRIPOOR KNIGHTS

Wolvie's storied first meeting with Captain America unfolds in ***Uncanny*** **#268**, a tale that jumps between 1941 and the present. The heroes of yesteryear rescue the future Black Widow and defeat a plot to bring down the Soviet Union, while Wolverine, Psylocke, Jubilee and Black Widow break up a mysterious German plot in the present. Oh, and Wolvie kicks ninja ass in both time frames. **NM Value: $25**



5. HIGH TIDE

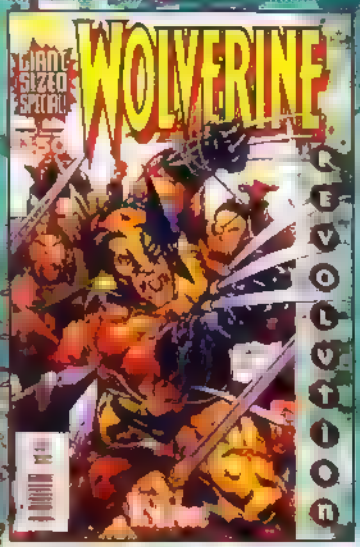
Spider-Man gets a crash course in international espionage in ***Spider-Man vs. Wolverine***. The webhead travels to Berlin and gets mixed up in some unfinished business from Wolvie's spy days. As the grizzled X-Man keeps reminding the youngster, Spidey is in waaaay over his head, as Wolverine's brutal tactics and ruthlessness introduce the web-slinger to a whole new world of right and wrong. **NM Value: $23**

4. VICIOUS CIRCLE

First impressions are key—and Wolverine and ol' Green Genes didn't exactly get off to a good start. The bad blood boils over again during ***Incredible Hulk* #340** when Wolverine travels to Dallas to hunt a familiar scent. The Hulk, now smarter, grayer and more cruel, goads Wolvie into a berserker rage, and the results ain't pretty as the two bruisers slug it out, spilling lots of blood in the process. **NM Value: $40**

3. SCARLET IN GLORY

The man can't even get married in peace. The Silver Samurai stirs up trouble on the eve of Wolverine and Mariko's wedding in ***Uncanny* #172-#173**. Logan doesn't take kindly to threats against his beloved, so the two warriors settle their differences with claws and swords. But the real fireworks come at the wedding itself, when Mariko calls off the ceremony! Sword wounds sting—rejection hurts worse. **NM Value: $15 apiece**



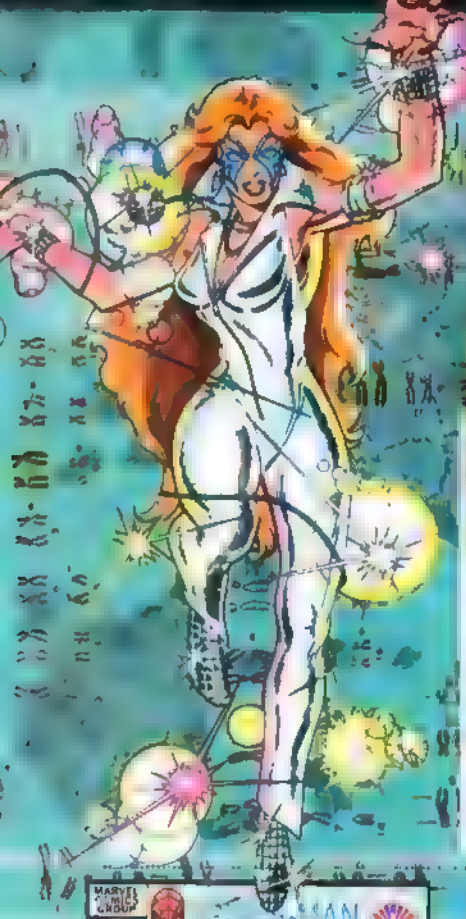
2. BLOOD DEBT

Wolverine *always* pays his debts in full. The action-packed ***Wolverine* #150-#153** finds Logan returning to Japan to visit Amiko, the daughter of his beloved Mariko. But trouble tends to find Wolvie, and he quickly gets mixed up in a battle for control of a criminal clan. With swords and bullets flying, the fast-healing X-Man teaches scores of Japanese goons that crime just doesn't pay. **NM Value: $2.75-$3.25**

1. WOLVERINE

Looking for a story that captures the essence of Wolverine? Look no further than ***Wolverine* #1-#4**, the acclaimed mini-series by Chris Claremont and Frank Miller. Logan's struggles with love and honor lead him to Japan, where his pursuit of Mariko lands him smack dab in the middle of a duel with her evil father Shingen. Toss in the greatest berserker rage of all time—Logan versus an entire army of Hand ninjas!—and you've got a story that combines everything that makes Wolvie great into one kickass package. **NM Value: $40-$60**

10 ODDBALL X-MOMENTS



BEAM ME UP, KITTY

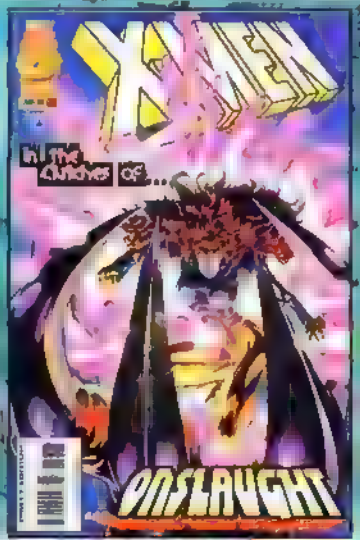
In *Star Trek/X-Men*, Marvel boldly went where no comic had gone before when it teamed the X-Men with the Enterprise crew. When a Starfleet officer named "Gary" is possessed by Proteus, it's up to the two fanboy icons to take care of business. From Wolverine surviving a Vulcan nerve pinch to Spock and Beast discussing astrophysics, this is one crossover that's worth every penny. **NM Value: $5**

CANNIBAL X

Jamie Maddrox, a.k.a. the Multiple Man, just can't win in the Marvel U. First, he tried to kick it with X-Factor, but that failed with flying colors when he got killed. Second, he got killed AGAIN recently in *Uncanny X-Men*. Then, in Marvel's alternate future *Universe X: Beasts* special, he's forced to eat one of his multiples to survive! That's not so much bizarre as it is FREAKIN' DISGUSTING! **NM Value: $4**

DAZZLER VS...GALACTUS?

Galactus has had some impressive heralds: the Silver Surfer, Firelord, the Destroyer, etc. But the devourer of planets is also a closet disco fan! After his relationship with herald Terrax goes sour, Galactus seeks out mutant disco diva Dazzler in *Dazzler* #10-#11 hoping to recruit her to fetch the rebellious Terrax from a black hole. (After all, few Marvel characters can match her sheer power...uh, right?) **NM Value: $2 apiece**



CHARLIE LOVES JEAN?

Let's face it—Jean Grey's a hottie. She's got a kickass body and that whole "dark past" thing going on. No wonder Prof. X harbors a secret crush on her...or does he? When Jeanie takes on Onslaught in *X-Men* #53, he takes her into Charlie's head, and it's revealed he's had a crush on the redhead since the day they met (which, considering they met when she was a little kid, is just plain gross). **NM Value: $5.50**

MEET THE X-BABIES

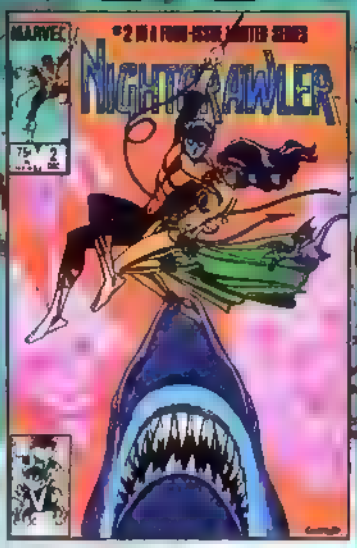
Apparently, Marvel's logic behind *Uncanny X-Men Annual* #10's so-adorable-it-hurts mini-mutants was, "If it worked for the Muppets, it's gotta work for the X-Men!" Yet for some strange reason, fans preferred the high-octane action going on in the core titles over a baby-named team consisting of Wolvie, Cyke, Colossusus, Shower, Creepy Crawler and Boyo. **NM Value: $10**

WOLVIE HAS NO NOSE

Looks like those claws weren't the only thing made of adamantium. Much like Michael Jackson's fake nose once Wolvie got the adamantium yanked from his body in ***Wolverine*** **#100**, his schnozz also magically disappeared. And apparently, Wolverine's sniffer was the only thing that kept his feral side in check, because after that, he slipped into a state of animal rage. **NM Value: $11**

PRYDE AND OY

In ***Uncanny*** **#153**, while the X-Men recover after a Hellfire Club attack that left the school in shambles, Kitty Pryde weasels out of clean up duty by telling little Illyana a bedtime story. In it, Kitty takes on the role of Pirate Kitty and sets off to save Princess Jean. Apparently, the X-Men don't get out much, since members eavesdrop on Kitty's tale and then tell her she did a great job at the end. **NM Value: $15**



NUDE•CRAWLER

Kurt Wagner seems like a misunderstood mutant, but behind his demonic appearance beats the heart of Michael Jackson. (Woo-hoo! Two M.J. jokes in one feature!) He teleports to a mystical land via a Danger Room mishap in ***Nightcrawler*** **#2**. As the X-Men try frantically to retrieve him, the two accidentally transport his clothes, leaving Kurt briefly buck-nekkid in front of a bunch of horrified kids! **NM Value: $2**

CYCLOPS VS. A GIANT SQUID!

It's adventure on the high seas starring Cyclops in ***Uncanny*** **#176**! After their chartered aircraft loses power somewhere over the South Pacific, Scott and Madelyne Summers get busy fixing it, only to come face to face with a giant shark, followed by a giant octopus. After Scotty blasts the octopus to oblivion, the two fly off without the slightest concern of possibly killing an endangered species. **NM Value: $10**

...WORDS FAIL US

Where to begin in describing ***Power Pachyderms*** **#1**? In it, you've got a team consisting of half X-Men/half elephants such as Rumbo (Wolverine), Trunklops (Cyclops), Mammoth (Colossus) and Electralux (Elektra—*wait a second*, Elektra's not even a mutant!) calling themselves the Power Pachyderms. If that's not enough, the double Ps take on Clarinetto, the leader of the Brotherhood of Evil Musicians (a gang of celebrity impersonators). What the hell was Marvel's editorial department smoking when they approved this, and where can we get some? **NM Value: $1.25**

■ **CASEY SEIJAS**

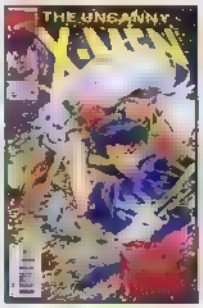
10 CREATOR MILESTONES

10. SCOTT LOBDELL

Realizing there were too many cooks in the X-kitchen, Marvel let Lobdell pen his first solo tale in *Uncanny X-Men* #289. Lobdell fleshed out the dramatic character interaction that has always made *X-Men* such a compelling read. Be it the passion between Forge and Storm, Archangel's conflict with his inner demons or Bishop's feelings of alienation, Lobdell proved his knack for character development. **NM Value: $5**

9. ADAM KUBERT

Long before penciling *Ultimate X-Men*, Adam Kubert got his break with *Uncanny* #368, in which the U.N. places Magneto as ruler of Genosha. The story gave Kubert a chance to display his expressive faces and dramatic layouts. When Wolverine tirelessly runs a Danger Room scenario in which he eviscerates Magneto, Kubert proved equally adept at penciling blockbuster action sequences. **NM Value: $3**



8. JOE MADUREIRA

Today, using manga artists is a no-brainer, but 10 years ago, when penciler Joe Madureira penciled *Uncanny* #312, it was almost unheard of. Madureira's sharp linework and clean action sequences made him an instant hit with fans. Over time, his popularity increased as the subtle manga influence in his style became more evident. His work eased the transition towards more stylized manga artists like Kia Asamiya. **NM Value: $5**

7. GRANT MORRISON

When even hardcore X-fans were finding the series more complicated than "Mission Impossible" in Swahili, Marvel brought aboard Morrison to revamp the title. His reconstructive surgery on *X-Men* was so drastic, it beckoned the preface "New" to be tacked on with issue #114. Between genocide at Genosha and Professor X's evil twin, Morrison revitalized the X-Men with some nuclear-powered shock therapy. **NM Value: $8**

6. MARC SILVESTRI

Silvestri developed his signature style while penciling X-Men, beginning with *Uncanny* #218. After John Romita Jr.'s run, it took a number of fill-ins before Marvel found Silvestri, who kicked off his run with a serious slugfest that pitted Dazzler, Rogue, Psylocke and Longshot against the unstoppable Juggernaut. Silvestri exhibited dynamic action scenes that were as explosive as they were detailed. **NM Value: $10**

5. DAVE COCKRUM

While bell-bottoms and parachute collars died after the '70s, Cockrum's fashion designs lived on. Stuck in reprints for years, *X-Men* was in dire need of resuscitation. Cockrum came aboard with *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 and brought Colossus, Sunfire, Thunderbird, Storm, Nightcrawler, Banshee and Wolverine with him. Cockrum's designs for the characters remained the staple for years afterward. **NM Value: $1,000**

4. NEAL ADAMS

Neal Adams' depiction of the X-Men battling the Living Pharaoh looks like most A-list 1990s art—but he did it in the 1960s! When Adams came to Marvel, he asked Stan Lee to put him on their worst selling title, hoping he could save it. But since few fans read *X-Men*, Adams' realistic character renditions, innovative layouts and outstanding storytelling (beginning with *Uncanny* #56) weren't appreciated until years later. **NM Value: $100**

3. JIM LEE

The Reavers were ready to attack when the Orphan-Maker and Nanny—aw screw it, it's Jim Lee! A longtime X-Men fan, Lee slipped easily into penciling duties with *Uncanny* #248 and brought a hard-hitting, gritty feel to the series. His Wolverine looked meaner than a Pit Bull on PCP and ripped right through the page, and Lee wowed fanboys with his supermodel renditions of Rogue, Psylocke and Jean Grey. **NM Value: $30**

2. JOHN BYRNE

No match-up since milk and Oreos has so delighted X-Men fans since the team-up of writer Chris Claremont and artist John Byrne. When Byrne took over the artist's chores on *Uncanny* #108, things clicked into place for the series as it launched into one of the most memorable runs in comic history. This issue, in which the X-Men slug it out with the guardians of the M'Kaan Crystal, set the exceptional artistic tone for Byrne's legendary stint. **NM Value: $125**

1. CHRIS CLAREMONT

With his first scripted X-Men story in *Uncanny* #94, Claremont laid the seeds for his 16-year X-run. From the antagonism between the pugnacious Wolverine and Cyclops the Boy Scout to the oxymoron of Nightcrawler with his demonic visage and saintly persona, Claremont understood that three-dimensional characters were as important as mind-blowing action. Stan Lee may have created the X-Men, but Chris Claremont raised them. **NM Value: $1,000** ■ **TC**

10 MOST VALUABLE X-ISSUES

10. UNCANNY X-MEN #6

The X-Men face their greatest foe in one of their earliest issues—the world's largest magnet! Magneto constructs a magnet with power the world has never seen. He also lures the Sub-Mariner to his island base, convincing the Avenging Son to battle the X-Men. Unfortunately, Magneto's plans fall apart as the Subby turns on him, smashing his precious magnet and forcing bucket-head to flee. **NM Value: $400**

9. UNCANNY X-MEN #12

The first appearance of the Juggernaut hits the X-Men like...well, a juggernaut. Revealing Professor Xavier's origin for the first time, fans learn that Xavier originally used his powers to excel in both scholastic and athletic endeavors at school, but realized all his awards and trophies were for naught and that he should help humanity. His step-brother the Juggernaut's origin is revealed as well. **NM Value: $475**

8. UNCANNY X-MEN #5

In what would become an *X-Men* standard, Angel is captured and tortured by Magneto to reveal the location of the X-Men's base. In the first appearance of Asteroid M, the X-Men race into space and take on Quicksilver, the Scarlet Witch, Mastermind and Magneto before the base is destroyed when the Witch, who doesn't want to see the X-Men killed, puts a hex on her father's control panel. **NM Value: $600**

7. UNCANNY X-MEN #3

Sensing a mutant—a very fat mutant—Xavier sends the X-Men to a carnival to investigate. Marking the first appearance of the Blob, this issue's stuffed with as much action as Blobby is with cheesecake. Convinced by Jean Grey's curves to meet Xavier, Blob sees himself as the X-Men's better and launches a full-scale attack with other circus performers and a trained gorilla—that's right, a gorilla! **NM Value: $900**

6. UNCANNY X-MEN #94

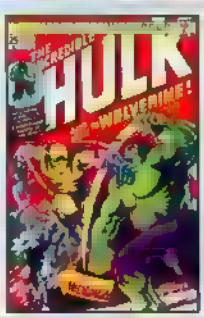
The first appearance of the new X-Men team in the revamped *X-Men* title gets off to a rocky start as the original members decide they clash too much with the new team and all but Cyclops quit. But it's not long before Xavier sends the new team to Colorado to face Count Nefaria, who's just taken over the NORAD Missile Command System. Chris Claremont wrote this issue's script, his first X-Men work. **NM Value: $1,000**

5. GIANT-SIZE X-MEN #1

After almost being cancelled, the X-Men returned in 1975 with an all-new, all-different international team: Banshee, Sunfire, Storm, Wolverine, Colossus and Thunderbird. Formed to find the original X-Men, who have gone missing during a mission, the team follows Cyclops to the deserted island of Krakoa that turns out to be a mutant that feeds on mutants. Everyone agrees that Cyclops' vacation spot sucks. **NM Value: $1,000**

4. UNCANNY X-MEN #4

Featuring Magneto's second appearance and the first of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, this issue also marks the one-year anniversary of Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters' charter. While the X-Men eat cake, Magneto takes over the island of Santa Marco. Xavier loses his powers, but in issue #5, he reveals he only pretended to lose them so that the X-Men could learn to work better as a team. Oh Chuck, you scamp! **NM Value: $1,000**



3. INCREDIBLE HULK #181

One of the most prized issues in comic history, this ish features the first full appearance of Wolverine (following a brief cameo in *Hulk* #180). Dispatched by the Canadian government to stop the Hulk, Wolverine uses his foot-long adamantium claws to hack and slash his way into the hearts and minds of fans, which would make him the most recognizable mutant on the planet. **NM Value: $1,100**

2. UNCANNY X-MEN #2

In the second-ever appearance of the X-Men, an urgent summons from Xavier leads the X-Men to face the Vanisher, a mutant teleporter. First robbing a bank and then appearing in a top-secret United States defense meeting, the Vanisher assembles a gang to help him pull off daring crimes. Confronting the criminal on the White House lawn, the X-Men are helpless until Xavier uses his mental powers to make the criminal forget who he is! **NM Value: $2,500**

1. UNCANNY X-MEN #1

The first appearance of Cyclops, Beast, Angel, Iceman, Marvel Girl and Professor Charles Xavier (as well as top X-villain Magneto) debuted in 1963 and changed comic heroes and their opponents forever with the introduction of mutants. Working as a team for the first time in this Stan Lee and Jack Kirby-crafted adventure, the X-Men weaken Magneto's force field until the Master of Magnetism is forced to flee. **NM Value: $10,000**

■ MIKE COTTON

EXCLUSIVE!

PUNISHER: THE MOVIE

THOMAS JANE trains with Navy SEALS, studies Garth Ennis and refines 30-second kill moves for role as Frank Castle

BY MIKE COTTON

WIZARD: You've been training with former Navy SEALS and DEA agents for your Punisher role. What's that been like?

JANE: Today I'm working on Filipino, Brazilian, Israeli and Japanese martial arts. I'm learning military weapons training from some former Navy SEALS. They're just great guys, you'd never know that they can do what they can do.

Do you have a favorite weapon yet?

I love the edge-weapon fighting stuff we're doing. That's my weapon of choice right now. Learning the close combat stuff and knife fighting has been amazing. My other training is really geared towards military-style weapons handling, so I work with a Colt .45 and the M4 submachine gun. This is my first time ever doing any training like this.

So what's the quickest way to kill a man?

Oh, that'd be gouging his eyes out. By the time they get done with me, I'll be able to handle myself in a real situation. And that's what we're going for. We're not going for the amazing stuff they do in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" or "The Matrix"—we want this to look real. We're taking the attitude of, "What would you do to take this guy out and accomplish your goals?" And that comes down to punching him in the throat, gouging his eyes and breaking his nose. That kind of stuff.

GUN SHOT Don't see Thomas Jane? There's a reason. With production just beginning on "Punisher," check upcoming issues of *Wizard* for the exclusive official look of the gun-toting vigilante.

It sounds like you can really kick some ass now...

Frank Castle's a real guy, he doesn't have any superpowers. He's incredibly well-trained at killing people. That's his job and that becomes his mission when his family is taken away from him. He can't crawl on walls or fly, he can just poke your eyes out.

> **"Frank Castle can't crawl on walls or fly, he can just poke your eyes out."**
>
> —THOMAS JANE

Is it tough for you to get into a character that just wants to kill?

I have a family now—I just had a three-and-a-half-month-old baby girl—and Frank just lost his family, which sends him off on this one-man killing storm. For me, all I have to do is think of if anything happened to my wife, and what I'd want to do about it. I just pray that every night, that never happens. Now, I have the tools to do something about it. It's easy to get into this part when you care about something so much.

But Frank's a little crazy, right?

No, I think Frank takes the tools and training he has and reacts in a very rational way and commits himself to such an extent that some people might call him nuts, but he's doing the only thing he knows how. He's reacting to the situation in the only way he can and he does the only thing he can. What he does is the only thing that keeps him sane.

Does your family have a military background?

My uncle is one of a handful of guys who have a plaque on the wall at the Pentagon. He fought in three wars. My grandfather fought in WW II and my other grandfather was a career Navy man. Both of my parents were in the Army. I was born in a M*A*S*H* unit in Vietnam. I have a lot to live up to.

Are you studying the comics for reference?

Oh yeah, I've been checking out the comics. I especially like Garth Ennis' "Welcome Back, Frank" mini-series. I've got *Punisher War Zone* #1-#6 and *Punisher War Journal* #1-#3 and #5-#6, where he fights Wolverine, too. Those are cool issues.

Do you think you could take out Hugh Jackman's Wolverine from "X2"?

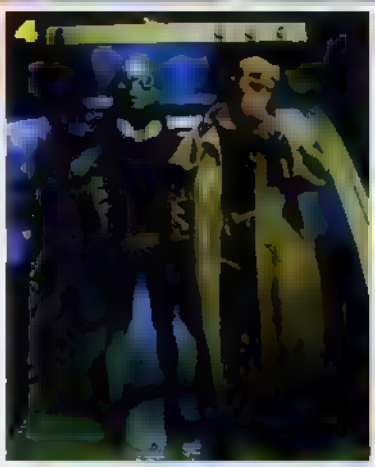
I think it's a great idea to see Wolverine and Punisher square off. A little cross-pollination in the Marvel Films franchises. I think I could do okay.

Are you going to be able to do most of your own stunts?

I'm going to do as many of my own stunts as possible, or until the insurance company pulls the plug on me. As long as they're not around, I'm clear to do anything I want. When the insurance company comes to visit, that's when we let the stuntmen fill-in for me. ■

HELLISH VISIONS!

Exclusive photos from the set of 'Hellboy'



Hell hath no fury like a demon born "Hellboy" will hit theaters Memorial Day 2004, courtesy of director Guillermo del Toro ("Blade II") and Revolution Studios. With fan anticipation building to a furious pitch, *Wizard*'s stoking the fires with seven images (five exclusive) from the set!

The very first image of Ron Perlman in Hellboy make-up (1) was fans' first glimpse of the cult hero come to life. Hellboy pays a visit to an institutionalized Liz Sherman (Selma Blair, 2) and prepares to plug a monster with his trademark gun (3). When it came to designing characters like Abe Sapien (Doug Jones, 4), the filmmakers decided that the less CG, the better.

Expect plenty of supporting characters from the comics—including the Nazi Ilsa Haupstein (Biddy Hodson, 5), and check out Perlman exploring a Russian cemetery in search of a talkative corpse (6). Finally, would *you* mess with this trio of butt-kicking paranormal investigators (7)? ■ **RICHARD HO**

More Hellboy...

HELLBOY WEIRD TALES
August's issue #4 features a story by John Cassaday and a cover by Leinil Yu.

B.P.R.D. NIGHT TRAIN
Geoff Johns and Scott Kolins team up for this *B.P.R.D.* one-shot in September.

TRAILERS...

BATMAN On a June episode of Comedy Central's "The Daily Show," actor Guy Pearce ("Memento") said that he hadn't yet turned down the role of Batman. Ashton Kutcher ("Just Married"), at one time in the running for the role of Superman, is rumored to be in consideration as well for the lead in the Christopher Nolan–directed flick.

BATMAN ANIMATED The producers of "Static Shock" are said to be developing an all-new Batman cartoon, with the rumored title "Batman Wired."

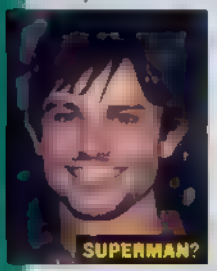
BLADE 3 "Blade: Trinity" could be the working title for the last installment of the "Blade" series (written and directed by David Goyer), set to begin production in Vancouver this summer.

CATWOMAN Warner Bros. has brought in screenwriter Ed Solomon ("Men in Black") to sink his claws into the Halle Berry vehicle, rumored to be hitting theaters on July 30, 2004.

CRIMINAL MACABRE MGM has nabbed the film rights to Steve Niles' Dark Horse mini-series starring paranormal investigator Cal McDonald.

IRON MAN "[Screenwriters] Alfred Gough and Miles Millar are still working on the script, but as soon as we have it completed, we'll go after a director and star," said Marvel Films Vice President Kevin Feige. "That's one we'd love to have going by early 2004."

LUKE CAGE Sweet Christmas! Columbia Pictures has picked up the rights to Marvel's very own Hero for Hire. Ben Ramsey ("The Big Hit") will tackle the script.



NAMOR "The script for 'Namor' should be ready in a mere couple of weeks," said Feige. "We'd love to have a director by summer or fall."

PUNISHER Supporting characters such as Stanley Bumpo and Joan the Mouse (from Garth Ennis' *Punisher* series) are slated to appear in the film. Mystique fans take note: Rebecca Romijn-Stamos is rumored to be up for the role of Joan!

SUPERMAN "Charlie's Angels" director McG is once again rumored to be attached to Warner Bros.' reinvigoration of the Man of Steel franchise. The latest actor rumored to be up for the part of Superman is Jason Behr ("Roswell"), while Colin Hanks' ("Orange County") name has been bandied about as a possible Jimmy Olsen.

■ THE WIZARD STAFF

TRAILER OF THE MONTH

TRANSFORMERS

Producer Tom DeSanto ("X2") has teamed with Angry Films head Don Murphy (who produced "League of Extraordinary Gentlemen") for a live-action feature starring the Robots in Disguise.

"I'm going to do with Transformers what was done with X-Men—which is sort of look at the mythology," said DeSanto. "I'm not going to get into 'Beast Wars' or any of that. It will be very much Optimus Prime, Megatron; that milieu."

CONNERY UN-CANNED!

Sean Connery, the notoriously press-shy star of Fox's "League of Extraordinary Gentlemen," doesn't grant formal interviews, but here's how we imagined one would sound, with lines taken exclusively from his most popular films. So what does the League's leader have to "say"?

WIZARD: Word from the set is that you and "League" director Stephen Norrington didn't get along so well. What did he say that set you off?

CONNERY: You have the manners of a goat. And you smell like a dungheap! And you have no knowledge whatsoever of your potential!

***Right*...so, what happened between you and Norrington?**

Just like a wop to bring a knife to a gunfight!

When he got in your face, how'd you respond?

"Are you sure you want to have a fight? Because I'm only gonna use my thumb!"

That's hardcore!

They pull a knife, you pull a gun. He sends one of yours to the hospital, you send one of his to the morgue! *That's* the Chicago way!

How was Norrington feeling after the encounter?

Shaken, not stirred.

So other than that behind-the-scenes stuff, what was it like working on the film adaptation of Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*?

It reminds me of the heady days of Sputnik and Yuri Gagarin, when the world trembled at the sound of our rockets.

Did you read the original comic? What did you take away from it?

It tells me that goose-stepping morons like yourself should try reading books instead of burning them.

Is there any truth to the rumor you'll show up in the fourth Indiana Jones movie?

We named the *dog* Indiana!

What's your favorite pick-up line for meeting a beautiful woman?

Welcome to the Rock!

Do you have a philosophy on leading a successful life, Mr. Connery?

Why do Chinese girls taste different from all other girls?

What the heck does that mean?

You're the man now, dawg!

■ JOHN B. LACEY

CONNERY AS ALAN QUATERMAIN

CONNERY PHOTO BY 20TH CENTURY FOX. JASON BEAR AND GUY PEARCE BY WIRE IMAGE

'DD' ON DVD

See what Matt Murdock missed

Ever dream of cornering a leather-clad Jennifer Garner in your bedroom? Your chance comes July 29. 20th Century Fox's DVD release of "Daredevil" stars Garner as that sassy minx Elektra, and Ben Affleck as blind-lawyer-turned-vigilante Matt Murdock (a.k.a. Daredevil) Blinded in an accident, his four remaining senses become super-heightened enough for him to clean up New York's Hell's Kitchen neighborhood from crime and corruption.

The story of this $100-million blockbuster revolves around a convergence of events: the rise of the Kingpin (Michael Clarke Duncan), his hiring of dead-shot assassin Bullseye (Colin Farrell), the tragedy of Elektra (Jennifer Garner) and her doomed romance with DD Director/screenwriter Mark Steven Johnson proves to be such a comic fanboy, he deftly lifts dialogue and scenes straight from the comics.

DAREDEVIL
Ben Affleck, Jennifer Garner
Rated PG-13, 103 minutes

Crammed with extra features, the DVD includes a separate section for the movie buff and one for the comic book aficionado. Here are the coolest bonus features.

MEN WITHOUT FEAR—This documentary spotlights the comic writers and artists who have impacted the character's evolution over the years, including Stan Lee, Kevin Smith and more

THE MAKING OF 'DAREDEVIL'—This behind-the-scenes look at the making of "Daredevil" interviews everyone from director Johnson to the Elektra-fying Garner. Take a look at how the film was put together, including the special effects and stunts.

OTHER EXTRAS—Other bonus material includes audio commentary by Johnson, Garner's screen test, a Kingpin featurette, a look at the world through Daredevil's senses, theatrical trailers, music videos and an Easter egg of bloopers and outtakes. Despite the rumors, there will be no deleted 20-minute scene featuring rapper Coolio Guess the filmmakers let that one slide, slide, slippity slide ■ **DANNY CONSTANTINO**

DVD BUZZ...

ALIAS: THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON Get in on TV's head-spinning spy thriller from the start. This six-disc DVD set starring the lovely Jennifer Garner as spy-girl Sydney Bristow comes packed with extras, including deleted scenes and outtakes. (Sept. 2)

BABYLON 5: THE COMPLETE THIRD SEASON This six-disc DVD set collects J. Michael Straczynski's sci-fi cult classic that aired in 1996. Many consider the third season the best as it ties up some ongoing story plots, begins an intergalactic war and contains some of the coolest cliffhangers in TV history! (Aug. 12)

BATMAN THE ANIMATED SERIES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS In this collection of four episodes of the hit Warner Bros. cartoon, Batman faces off against D.A. Harvey Dent in the tragic "Two-Face" two-parter, redeems a mob boss' soul in the heartfelt "It's Never Too Late," and battles the Penguin in "I've Got Batman in My Basement." That naughty Penguin. (July 22)

BILL TUCCI *Shi* creator Bill Tucci wrote, produced and directed the award-winning independent film "Some Trouble of a SeRRious Nature." This flick chronicles the actions of a group of hillbillies during World War II, who are determined to fly an old Chance Vought F4U Corsair fighter plane. (August)

DEATH OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK This 1990 made-for-TV movie presents the final fate of Dr. David Banner, as he desperately searches to cure himself of the Hulk. Instead, he found another way: bad ratings. (Available now)

LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS This gem packs Peter Jackson's epic movie along with a ton of extras, including a 10-minute behind the scenes look at the upcoming "Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King." (Aug. 26)

TOP COW Top Cow Productions' documentary "Countdown to Wednesday" interviews top comic book vets Stan Lee, Marc Silvestri, Paul Dini and more as they share advice on how to break into the comic biz. (Aug. 6)

THE SIMPSONS SEASON 3 BOX SET 20th Century Fox Video collects the entire '91 season including fan-favorite episodes such as "Flaming Moe's" and "Lisa's Pony," along with of a ton of extra goodies. (Aug. 26)

DVD OF THE MONTH

CHALLENGE OF THE SUPER FRIENDS: UNITED THEY STAND

This DVD collects four exciting episodes of the 1970s Saturday morning 'toon. Join Superman, Batman, Black Vulcan (shown) and crew as they face off against Lex Luthor, Brainiac and the rest of the Legion of Doom! Episodes include a fight to free the Super Friends from imprisonment within the the center of the Earth; time-traveling to see the origins of some familiar Super Friends; and a large-scale episode that has the heroes grow into 100-foot tall Giants of Justice! Hence, making Apache Chief even more moot. (July 22)

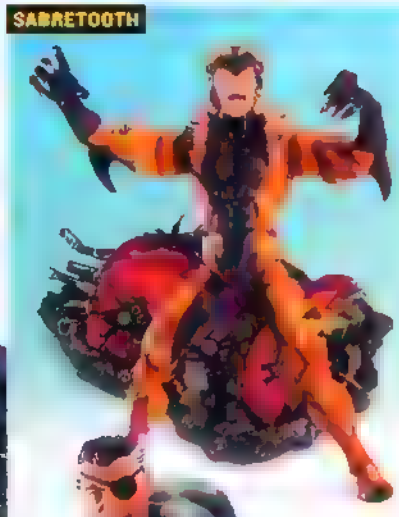
MARVEL LEGENDS' WAVE 5 IS ALIVE!

Just when you thought Toy Biz's Marvel Legends figures couldn't possibly get any cooler, the toymaker unleashes Wave 5 of the super-posable action figures, and this series consists of a whopping SEVEN figures! Wave 5 is scheduled to ship in December, and the figures should retail in the $7-8 price range

COLOSSUS

MR. FANTASTIC

SILVER SURFER & HOWARD THE DUCK 2-PACK



SABRETOOTH

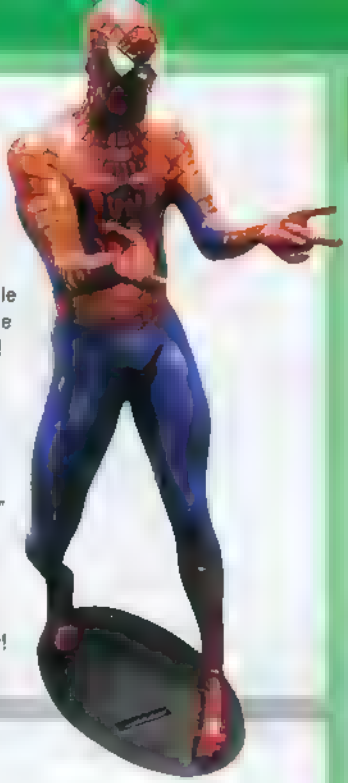
NICK FURY

RED SKULL

BLADE

SPIDEY'S BIG AS LIFE AND TWICE AS NICE

Other than taking home Tobey Maguire in the spider-suit this life-sized Spider-Man replica from Gentle Giant Studios and Cyber FX could be the ultimate Spider-Man collectible! Created from digital scans of the actual Spider-Man suit, this replica features raised 3-D webbing, airbrushed fabric and reflective eyepieces. The Life-Sized Spider-Man Replica stands a whopping 67" tall (that's 5' 7"), 24" wide and 36" deep atop its base, and it'll set you back $1,500 when it hits stores in November. Hey, it's cheaper than genetically altering your own spider!



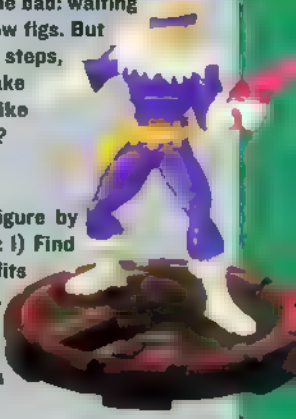
BABY BAMF!

Elves are supposed to by tiny, but Bowen Designs (www.bowendesigns.com) takes miniatures to the next level with this Nightcrawler mini-statue! This sculpture of the X-Men's fuzzy blue elf measures just over 4" tall, was created by Thomas Kuntz and retails for $45 when it teleports into stores come September. How you get rid of the brimstone stench is entirely up to you.

FOR MORE STUFF, FLIP TO P. 156-157!

CLIX TIPS

The good: HeroClix rule. The bad: waiting for new expansions and new figs. But wait no longer! In five easy steps, we'll teach you how to make any figure you want (like Captain Cold here). Ready?



STEP 1: Pick 'em!

Base your custom on a figure by following two golden rules: 1) Find a figure with a pose that fits the character you wanna make; 2) Make sure he's cheap. Hydra operatives are exactly one-fifth of a cent each.

STEP 2: Shave 'em!

Use an X-acto Knife and—while cutting AWAY from you—whittle off unwanted parts. LEGAL DISCLAIMER: Don't use sharp tools if you're a little kid, stupid or a stupid little kid.

STEP 3: Dress 'em!

Using tissue paper, index cards and string, cut out the boot/glove trims, shoulder pattern and parka trim (draw 'em out first if you need to). Hold in position with tweezers and add a small drop of Krazy Glue. Hold for a couple seconds, let dry, then trim away excess. For Cold's hood, I used a small ball of TP (that's toilet paper) that I glued to the back of his head, let dry, then shaped an oversized hood with more of the TP/glue combo. When all that mess dried, I whittled it down to the smaller, final shape. FUN FACT: Captain Cold wears mittens.

STEP 4: Paint 'em!

Give him a light coat of white paint. Let him dry, and then look him over. Rough spots you missed will stand out, so take the time to fix any areas that look wonky. When you're done, give him another light coat of white.

STEP 5: Wrap 'em!

Using No. 2-sized brushes and bottled acrylic paint, put the finishing touches on this sucker. Two/three coats may be necessary. Hit him with a light—and we stress LIGHT—coat of matte sealant when you're done. Glue him to an appropriate dial, tweak whatever stats need tweakin' and take 'im to a local tournament to confuse the judges. Fun!

■ PHIL MASTERS

HEROES' WORLD Vicariously live through your own superhero creation in *City of Heroes*.

MULTI-PLAYER MADNESS

Online gaming opens up a whole new world for video game fanatics

When it comes to the ultimate video game experience, it's nice to get a little help from your friends.

Thanks to online gaming—the latest and greatest trend in the video game industry—gamers can link up with friends and strangers alike in vast virtual worlds designed to fully captivate the user. With a galaxy of new titles set to launch over the next year, gamers will soon be able to experience the worlds of *The Matrix*, *Final Fantasy*, *Star Wars* and other popular properties firsthand.

The appeal of Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) is clear. Players can create unique alter egos completely from scratch and enjoy total freedom in exploring, socializing, battling and even trash-talking their way across sprawling fantasy worlds—all without leaving the comfort of their couches.

PC games have long taken advantage of the Internet for online connectivity with smash hits like *Doom* and *Quake*. But in recent years, the trend has spread to next-generation gaming platforms—specifically, PlayStation 2 and Xbox. Sony pioneered the online platform craze with Internet-enabled games like *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs* and *EverQuest* and Xbox recently entered the online arena with its Xbox Live service. All you need is a Network Adaptor for PS2 or a Starter Kit for Xbox and a high-speed Internet connection for both.

Check out some of the hottest online releases that are sure to keep you plugged in over the next few months!

CITY OF HEROES (NCsoft, PC, release date TBA)

Heroes are born, not made—unless you happen to live in Paragon City.

Players can create and customize their very own superhero, right down to costume details, origin type and superpowers, in this game with a distinctive comic book vibe. Paragon City's hero population has been decimated by an alien invasion, and new heroes are needed to defend life and liberty against the forces of evil. As a heroic resident of Paragon City—think Metropolis and Astro City rolled into one—players can fly solo or form superteams to battle aliens, supervillains and evil organizations in a fully interactive 3-D world. Best of all, continuity buffs can participate in any of 20 ongoing storyarcs running through the game at all times.

STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

(LucasArts, PC, Available now, $49.95 for software, $12-$15 for access)

The galaxy may be far, far away, but the online community of LucasArts' latest MMORPG is as close as your own PC.

From the developers of *EverQuest*, *Star Wars Galaxies* takes place during the Galactic Civil War of the original trilogy, shortly after the first Death Star has been destroyed. Players align themselves as Rebel, Imperial or Neutral and choose from any of six job classes: bounty hunter, merchant, weaponsmith, bartender,

STAR WARS GALAXIES

smuggler or Jedi. *Galaxies* allows you to explore 10 different planetary environments, from the sand-swept deserts of Tatooine to the Jedi training camp at Dantooine!

FINAL FANTASY XI (Square Enix, PS2, PC, release date TBA)
The 11th installment of the *Final Fantasy* franchise introduces the brand new world of Vana'diel, where players can explore over 100 exciting locations spread out over three diverse countries. After customizing characters based on race (five different playable races, from the human-like Humes to the elf-like Elvaan), country of origin, gender, physical traits and job type, players can form parties of up to 18 fellow adventurers and embark on countless missions and quests

HALO 2 Microsoft Xbox Q1 2004)
The hotly anticipated *Halo 2* promises to set the standard for Xbox Live by totally redefining the online combat gaming experience. This time around, Master Chief stands as the last line of defense against an overwhelming Covenant invasion of Earth. New features include a vastly improved graphics engine, destructible environments, new abilities (like handling), new weapons and vehicles (like the Human 4-wheel ATV and the Covenant Shadow), and new Covenant races like the Brute and the Prophets.

THE MATRIX ONLINE (Ubi Soft, PC, 2nd half 2004)
Morpheus' gang may be fighting to bust *out* of the Matrix but gamers everywhere will be running to hack *into* the Matrix in 2004.

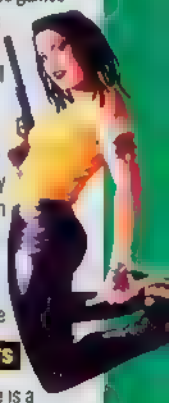
Players explore a massive and fully engrossing cityscape and participate in a storyline written by the Wachowski Bros. that picks up right after the films leave off. Learn kung fu, take on missions, fight Agents and interact with an extensive online community of fellow human batteries. You can even swap Matrix abilities like trading cards!

MARVEL (Vivendi Universal platform TBA, release date TBA)
An unprecedented MMORPG based on the Marvel Universe is currently in development, with an eye towards an early 2005 launch. Not much is known about the highly anticipated project—but fear not, Marvel Zombies, 'cuz a fully licensed recreation of the Marvel Universe, populated by every Marvel character imaginable, is definitely on the way!

■ RICHARD HO

THE BUZZ BIN

100 BULLETS, RED STAR Acclaim has struck exclusive deals with DC Comics and Archangel Studios to produce video games based on *100 Bullets* and *Red Star*, respectively. Vertigo's hard-boiled crime thriller and the computer-generated military epic will be brought to pixelated life on all next-generation gaming platforms in 2004.



BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU (Ubi Soft)
This beat-'em-up adventure lets you team up with a buddy to take down the ruthless Sin Tzu, a brand new villain designed by *Batman* artist Jim Lee. We're there! (PS2, Xbox, GameCube, Fall)

THE HULK (Vivendi Universal) Wanna unlock the game's gray Hulk? Just watch the "Hulk" movie! Appearing in the movie scene before Bruce Banner turns into the Hulk for the first time is a code. Then put that code into any computer terminal in the game

HALF-LIFE 2 (Vivendi Universal) *Half-Life 2*, the rabidly anticipated sequel to 1998's smashing first-person shooter, has been named the best game of E3 2003 as part of the "Game Critics Awards: Best of E3 2003." *Half-Life 2* debuts later this year

JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS. DEATH (Vivendi Universal) Take the law into your own hands with this first-person shooter, starring the badass Mega-City One enforcer! (PS2, Fall)

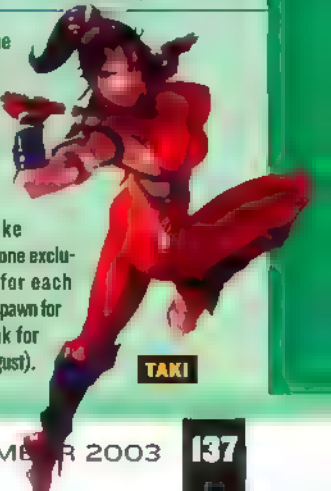
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING (Electronic Arts) Tolkien fans can get their fix of Middle-Earth action with EA's adaptation of the third "Lord of the Rings" flick. (PS2, Xbox, GameCube, Fall)

SILENT HILL 3 (Konami) Get ready to return to the haunted town of Silent Hill! New character Heather Morris stars in the third installment of the popular monster-filled franchise (PS2, August)

BUZZ OF THE MONTH

SOUL CALIBUR II (Namco)

Soul Calibur II has arrived, and the weapons-based fighter boasts smoother gameplay, improved graphics and a huge arsenal of over 200 collectible weapons in the new Weapons Master Mode. Old favorites like Mitsurugi Heishiro and Astaroth are joined by new combatants like Cassandra and Hong Yung Sung, and one exclusive character will be available for each platform—*Tekken*'s Heihachi for PS2, Spawn for Xbox and *The Legend of Zelda*'s Link for GameCube! (PS2, Xbox, GameCube, August).



5 QUESTIONS...

ARI ARAD

Ari Arad has Marvel in his blood.

In addition to overseeing Marvel's movie-based video game properties as Marvel Studios' VP of Production, Arad is also the son of Marvel Studios President Avi Arad. We caught up with the younger Arad to pick his brain on video games, movies and Power Pack...yes we said Power Pack.

WIZARD: What new Marvel video games are currently in development?

ARAD: There's always stuff that's pending and being discussed, but a lot of the big properties have already been picked up. Iron Man was picked up in the Activision deal, and I know they're still working on the *Fantastic Four* game. *Spider-Man 2* is looking amazing. I've been working on Encore's *Daredevil*, and THQ's *Punisher* is on the horizon. For the most part, our releases are tied to movies.

You oversee the creative side of video game development. What exactly does that involve?

It's basically looking at the games at various stages of development, identifying strengths and weaknesses and trying to make the game as good as possible. I'm a pretty avid gamer, and I always believed that for Marvel games, you want them to be exactly the way you imagined. When I was reading the comic books, I always wanted to be the Hulk and smash things. So creatively, it's always about making sure that the players get to be the Hulk or Wolverine or Spider-Man in exactly the same way that they always imagined. And we also have to make sure that we link the game to the movie in the smartest way possible. We're not making replicas of the movies, but we're making games that complement them. There's always more story to tell than you can ever fit in a movie, and video games are a perfect place to tell them.

Is there a favorite character that you'd like to see in a video game?

I think the Silver Surfer game would be an amazing epic. I also think Deadpool would be a really fun game. He's so madcap that he would make an awesome movie, and an ever more awesome game.

What kind of game styles are best suited for Marvel games?

I think it depends on the property. Currently, it's mostly first- and third-person shooters, because they're generally movie-based and hero-oriented. But there's definitely a lot of other ideas. You could do the Kree-Skrull war, which wouldn't be a first-person shooter—it would be a real-time strategy game. If you're doing a superhero game, odds are you want to stick with action.

Will Marvel ever run out of good characters for video games? Will we ever see a *Power Pack* game?!

I think a *Power Pack* game would be awesome! Here's the thing: If you look at some of these video games coming out that aren't Marvel, some of the ideas are ridiculous. I mean, a game where you steal cars? But hey, that turned out to be one of the greatest games ever! So no, we'll never run out of good ideas. ■ RH

CONSOLE TO COMIC

Here's a rundown of the first wave of video game-based comics set to storm the shelves in August and September!

DRAGON'S LAIR Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the groundbreaking classic arcade game from legendary animator Don Bluth, *Dragon's Lair* makes its comic book debut in August with a six-issue mini-series by author Andy Mangels and artist Fabio Laguna! Heroic knight Dirk the Daring must save his beloved Princess Daphne from the nefarious dragon Singe in this sword and sorcery adventure from MVCreations and CrossGen.

MEGAMAN September sees the launch of Dreamwave's brand-spankin' new line of Capcom comics with the debut of *Megaman*. How do you blend in at school when you lead a double life as a kickass robotic hero? Find out in this ongoing series from writer Brian Augustyn and artist Michael Fong!

SPACE ACE The second video game classic from Don Bluth to come to comic book life, *Space Ace* debuts in August from MVCreations and CrossGen. Follow the intergalactic adventures of the high-flying Ace, the beautiful Kimmy and the former baddie Baby Borf in this six-issue mini-series by writer Robert Kirkman and artist Paulo Borges!

STREET FIGHTER The long-awaited launch of Image and UDON's new *Street Fighter* series kicks off with a bang, as fan-favorite artist Joe Madureira returns to comics with a four-page back-up story in September's *Street Fighter* #1! The pages mark the artist's first interior comic art since *Battle Chasers*, so fans are sure to snap up this rare appearance of the Mad man himself!

Check out the art *below* for a tantalizing taste!

■ THE WIZARD STAFF

MAD MAX Joe Madureira battles back into comics with *Street Fighter*.

ANIME GOES LIVE

Hollywood turns anime into live-action blockbusters

From Akira to Dragon Ball Z, Hollywood speed lines your favorite Japanese animated properties and is offering them as live-action major motion picture deals!

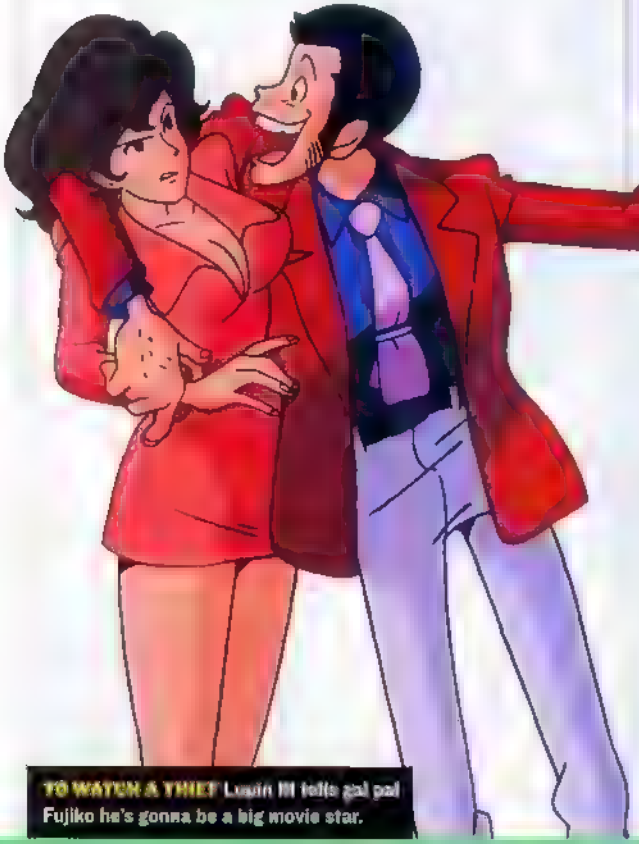
With the success of recent comic book movies such as "X2" and "Spider-Man," it was only a matter of time before movie studios sought out the next wave of hot, hip properties: anime. Producers Tom DeSanto ("X2") and Don Murphy ("League of Extraordinary Gentlemen") just announced they would team up and turn Hasbro's Transformers into live-action movie stars, but Optimus Prime and the rest of the 'Bots are just the most recent Japanese-born property to be picked up for development in this super-hot Hollywood trend.

Here's a breakdown of how these long-awaited properties are faring in development.

AKIRA Warner Bros. announced their plans back in October 2002 with Stephen Norrington ("Blade") directing and James Robinson ("League of Extraordinary Gentlemen") scripting. However, Norrington recently told us that he resigned from the project. "I have dropped out of all my Hollywood development deals because I want to pursue more creative avenues," he clarified. A spokesperson from Warner Bros. confirmed that the film was back in development and no new director had been attached.

BATTLE ANGEL ALITA The fans knew something was up once it was announced back in January 2001 that ADV would not be releasing any more "Alita" videos. Shortly after, 20th Century Fox registered two Internet domain names related to the OVA. Currently, the rights now belong to James Cameron ("Titanic") who in May said that "Alita" was in his production queue. Cameron's been quoted as saying, "It's a film that I'm going to be directing. And we'll probably do it in 3-D, too."

SUCH A PILL It's a short walk to Kaneda's bike, but a long road to the silver screen for "Akira."



TO WATCH A THIEF Lupin III tells gal pal Fujiko he's gonna be a big movie star.

DRAGON BALL Z March 2002 brought the announcement that 20th Century Fox would be producing the fight-heavy anime. Rumors regarding the details of the movie cropped up on the Internet, but a spokesman from Fox refuted all of them, including Industrial Light and Magic's involvement with the special effects.

LUPIN III In February, WhiteLight Entertainment announced they'd nabbed the rights to this long-time favorite anime. Since then, things have been zipping along for "Lupin" as Chet Thomas ("Minority Report"), president of production for Whitelight, said that they're in the middle of writing the treatment. "We have a good idea of where we want it to go," Thomas said.

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION At the 2003 Cannes Film Festival in May, ADV Films announced they would be producing this live-action movie in collaboration with creators Gainax and special effects house Weta Workshop, Ltd. ("Lord of the Rings") on an "aggressive" timeline. Details are very sparse, but conceptual art has already been seen floating on the Internet.

NINJA SCROLL March 2002 saw the announcement that Threshold Entertainment ("Mortal Kombat") picked up the rights to the wandering samurai epic. After completing the script in May, Threshold is now shopping around for talent.

■ **TRISHA L. SEBASTIAN**

ANIME BUZZBIN

DISNEY Anime fans are in a buzz wondering what three Ghibli films Disney/Buena Vista is going to release next. The rumor mill says "Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind" (based on Hayao Miyazaki's epic manga), "Porco Rosso" (the tale of a pilot-turned-pig in pre-WWII Italy), and an unnamed third could be in the lineup sometime in late 2003.

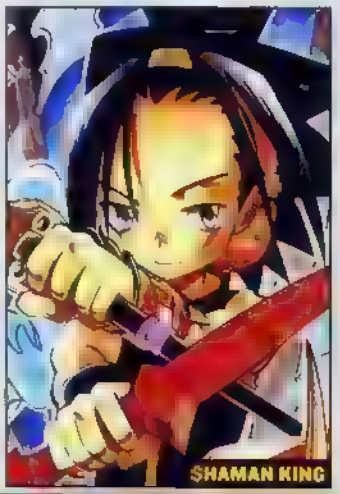
SHAOLIN SOCCER The cult Hong Kong movie hit is finally coming to America...in comic form. Andy Seto, famed *manwha* artist of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, fulfills the art duties on this tale of a former monk who uses his martial arts skills to lead his soccer team. *Shaolin Soccer* kicks off from ComicsOne in September.

SHAOLIN SOCCER

TECH TV Tech TV's Anime Unleashed block will get a little thicker when they debut three new series: "SoulTaker," "Gatekeepers 21," and "BoogiePop Phantom" (the first two from Pioneer and the latter from Right Stuf). All are set to debut June 24.

SHAMAN KING In September, expect your little brothers and sisters to go gaga over "Shaman King" on the FoxBox Saturday morning cartoon block. A massive hit in Japan, *Shaman King* (whose manga currently appears in *Shonen Jump*) mixes samurais, ghosts and comedy

MAO-CHAN Like "Hina" creator Ken Akamatsu's new series "Earth Defense Force Mao-Chan" will finally come to America in October from Pioneer. Less sexy than "Hina," "Mao-Chan" pits three little girls in drum major outfits against an invading alien armada


SHAMAN KING

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MONTH

TRIGUN MANGA HAS ARRIVED!

VASH THE STAMPEDE

At the recent Book Expo America licensing show, Dark Horse set anime fans in a tizzy with the announcement that they'll be producing the long-awaited *Trigun* manga, along with *Hellsing* and *The Ring* (based off the Japanese movie that was remade into an American hit). All due this November/December, these manga will be produced in their original Japanese left-to-right format, a first for Dark Horse.

MADE FOR AMERICA

Japan producing anime just for us gaijin

America used to be an afterthought to Japanese anime companies, a way to squeeze a little more longevity out of a title after its lifespan in Japan ended.

But now, with its economy in a slump, Japan is seeing America's anime craze as a potential goldmine—and making anime specifically for American audiences.

EYES HAVE IT Like the Big O, the Japanese see promise in the American market.

Due to premiere Aug. 31 on Cartoon Network, "The Big O 2" was made specifically for U.S. release. The original 13-episode series, which aired in Japan in 1999, was no ratings smash over there, despite ending on a cliffhanger with the words "To Be Continued." However, if "The Big O" hadn't met such success when it premiered on Cartoon Network's Toonami block in 2000, it wouldn't have continued at all.

O-TOWN Clockwise from top: The Big O, Dorothy, rich crimefighter Roger Smith and his butler Norman

"We saw the end of the show and were like 'What? That's it?'" said Toonami Creative Director Sean Akins. "We all felt the show had serious potential, and it was a champ in the ratings arena. We wanted more, the audience obviously wanted more."

Added Bandai's "Big O 2" Producer Charles McCarter, "Without the support of the American fans and Cartoon Network, there would not be a 'Big O 2.'"

But "The Big O 2" is just the beginning. "Ultimate Muscle," the wrestling/superhero/comedy currently airing on the FoxBox on Saturday mornings, has proven so successful that 4Kids, the show's licensor, has paid Toei Animation for more "Ultimate Muscle" episodes, even though the show ceased airing in Japan. These new episodes will be targeted specifically for American audiences, containing less violence.

If Japan is making anime specifically for America, the sky could be the limit. "The original creator of 'Cowboy Bebop,' Shinichiro Watanabe, has said he'd never do any more after the movie," said Akins. "But I keep asking them for more, and every time they seem to budge a little bit more. Who knows? Maybe one day we'll get more 'Bebop,' too!" ■ **ZAC BERTSCHY & ROBERT ERICKEN**

DIDJA KNOW...?

[illegible] watch Cartoon Network's Adult Swim block then [illegible] afternoon, Lono on [illegible] late-night show.

HOTIMPORTS

MANGA:

DRAGON BALL VOL. 12 (Viz) When a lizard-like monster kills Kunrin, Goku seeks revenge and instead runs into the terrifying Piccolo! **$7.95**

FUTURE WORLD VOL. 1 (Dark Horse) This cycle of original science-fiction graphic novels by Osamu Tezuka includes *Lost World* and *Metropolis*. **$13.95**

.HACK// LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT VOLUME 1 (Tokyopop) Shugo, an online gamer in the "The World," is given a powerful bracelet artifact from the mysterious player-character Aura, but why, and who is she? **$9.99**

SLAYERS SPECIAL: LESSER OF TWO EVILS (CPM Manga) Sorceresses Lina Inverse and Naga the Serpent meet thieves, teachers and suitors and more on their eternal quest for treasure. **$15.95**

ANIME:

AI YORI AOSHI VOL.4 (Pioneer) The gang heads to the beach, but can Kaoru resist temptation with so much eye candy around? DVD—**$29.98**

DARK MYTH (Manga Entertainment) This series really requires you to pay attention, as each of the stories follows themes of darkness, love, passion and truth. DVD—**$19.98**

LOVE HINA AGAIN MOVIE (BANDAI) Keitaro made it into the university of his dreams...but the problems don't end there! Follow the further mishaps of the world's luckiest undeserving bachelor in this hilarious new movie. DVD **$29.98**

SABRE MARIONETTE J ULTIMATE COLLECTION (BANDAI) It's "Sabre Marionette J", "J to X," and "Again" in one collection! In the future, the only women to be found are androids, but can Otaru handle three of them at once by himself? DVD—**$199.99**

STUFF:

3, 2, 1, LET'S JAM! (PIONEER) Anime music is hard to come by, but Pioneer's changing that! Fans can jam along to smoking anime tunes from *X*, the *Lain CYBERIA Mix* and the *Hellsing* soundtracks! (August) **$14.98**

INCENTIVE OF THE MONTH

NAJICA BLITZ TACTICS (ADV)

Men want her and women want to be her. A perfume chemist by day, and secret agent by night, the beautiful Najica tackles her cases with sophistication and her trademark red rose. During one mission, however, she saves a young girl named Lila, only to discover that she's an android, and is Najica's new partner! It's a pretty cool-looking series full of fan service and panty-shots, but to tell the truth, we're more interested in the pair of panties that comes included in the box set! DVD—**$44.98**

YUGI VS. GAMBIT

Each claims to be the King of Cards, but who should it be? Yugi, star of kiddie anime "Yu-Gi-Oh!" or Gambit, the Cajun-accented mutant from the X-Men? Time to ante up!

Has the power to win games with playing cards

Has the power to make playing cards explode

Speaks like a regular kid

Speaks like the stereotype of every French person in existence

Villains include a creepy white-haired guy who steals people's souls

Villains include a creepy white-faced guy who mucks with genetics

Continually gets his friends into trouble with his games

Gets into trouble just fine on his own

Shares a body with a 5,000-year-old spirit

Shares his body with Rogue—hotcha!

Bottom Line: Gambit is *le meilleur*, Cajun accent and all. Now if he would just get his powers back. And for you Gambit fans, *X-Treme X-Men* Editor Mike Marts hints that you may want to check out issue #31 in September for just this reason. ■ **TLS**

CATWOMAN

The feline femme fatale stalks the mean streets of Gotham City in this classic crime noir thriller

ED BRUBAKER
CAMERON STEWART
DC COMICS

Believe it or not, there are some neighborhoods in Gotham where even Batman won't go. And if you're gonna prowl the seedy East End, you'd better have nine lives.

Catwoman, best known as one of Batman's most recognizable rogues, operates as a high-end cat burglar (naturally), but one thing separates her from the other psychos around Gotham—she never kills. In fact, according to *Catwoman* writer Ed Brubaker, Selina Kyle possesses a highly evolved sense of justice, even though she has little respect for the law.

"The 'Catwoman as sexy klepto' had been done to death, so I wanted to return her to the roots laid down in 'Batman: Year One,'" notes Brubaker. "She's anti-establishment for all the right reasons. She was brought up in the system that let her down, and she had to raise herself on the streets. She'll break the law, and allow others to do so, as long as they abide by a code of conduct. She steals from people who take advantage of others without recourse. She won't go out and stop every supervillain who wants to rob a bank, but if it's a good plan, she might even go in on it!"

Since the book launched in 2002, Brubaker has consistently upped the ante against Selina in each subsequent storyarc, and much like a classic mystery serial, plays up the repercussions of Selina's actions.

In the "Relentless" storyarc (issues #12-#16), Catwoman steals millions of dollars from mobster Black Mask and a host of corrupt cops to fund a youth center, so the villains naturally want revenge. So what happens? Well, the youth center gets firebombed and completely destroyed; Selina's sister Maggie and brother-in-law Simon get kidnapped and tortured; and in a final act of sadism, the Black Mask feeds one of Simon's eyes to Maggie, an act that kills Simon, drives Maggie insane and sends Selina over a cliff of despair.

But depravity and despair add up to one thing: *Catwoman* is *the* purest noir comic on the racks today.

"Really good noir is about getting sucked into doing the wrong thing, or the right thing for the wrong reasons," explains Brubaker. "You have to have bad, unhappy endings when it comes to noir. I want to make *Catwoman* the best crime comic on the market, and her and the other street-level characters lend themselves perfectly to that."

After taking down the corrupt cops and surviving the Black Mask disaster, Selina and her supporting crew—best friend Holly and her paramour/partner, PI Slam Bradley—have been mired in the depths of despair ("No Easy Way Down," issues #17-#19). Each character struggles with their personal demons: Selina's battling guilt over her sister, isolating herself from those around her; Holly's wrestling with the knowledge that she took another person's life, as well as her former drug addiction, and Slam finds himself twisted up in knots over his love of Selina.

But after a heart-to-heart with the Dark Knight himself (putting aside the events currently transpiring in

DIDJA KNOW?

When Catwoman first appeared in 1940's *Batman* #1, she was simply known as The Cat. The Catwoman name change occurred in *Batman* #2.

PURR-MANENT TROUBLE For a bad girl like Catwoman, it hurts to be a good guy.

SEE NO EVIL Black Mask is such a twisted, f'ed-up bastard, he feeds Catwoman's sister her husband's *freakin' eyeball!*

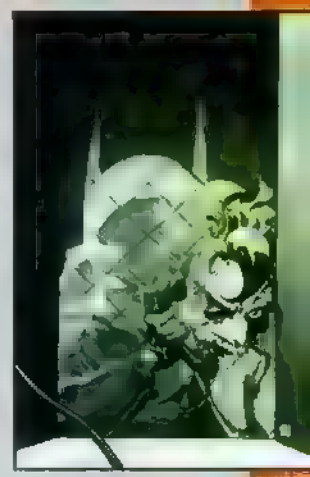
Batman), Selina wants the healing process to begin. That exchange leads into the current storyarc, "Wild Ride," a five-parter that wraps in October's issue #24. Selina and Holly hit the road and team up with some familiar faces in a host of a DCU hotspots, including New York City, where they canoodle with the JSA's Wildcat; Keystone City, where Captain Cold blackmails Selina into pulling a heist, Opal City, home of the former Jack Knight Starman and current residence of one-time mobster-turned-crusader Bobo Benetti; and finally St. Roch, the roosting spot of Hawkgirl.

But of course, Selina's actions have consequences. When she and Holly finally get back to Gotham, things in the East End are worse than ever, as the criminal element attempt to fill the power vacuum left by Black Mask. Plus, Egyptian ninjas with a sinister interest in Catwoman are tracking her every move, a subplot that will develop for many months to come. "Wild Ride" paves the way for a creative change, as artist Cameron Stewart (who's been trading duties with Javier Pulido) makes way for the incoming team of Paul Gulacy (*Master of Kung Fu*) and Jimmy Palmiotti (*21 Down*) with issue #25.

"I want to bring back that element of the dangling subplot that's been missing from comics lately," notes Brubaker. "A lot of stories these days are too tidy. I want to embrace the repercussions and the threads they create. Selina's such a good character; I'll never let this book become *Selina Kyle, Batman's Girlfriend*." ■ **ANDY SERWIN**

STRANGEBRU

If you dig *Catwoman* or like the other works of writer Ed Brubaker, be sure to check out these other titles the scribe pens each month.



DETECTIVE COMICS (DC) While Jim Lee and Jeph Loeb have been gaining all the attention with *Batman*, Brubaker's been crafting some kick-ass Bat-tales in the pages of *Detective*. A recently wrapped storyarc saw a new addition to the Bat-rogues—The Charlatan, a famous-actor turned-nutball who runs afoul of both Two-Face and the Scarecrow and winds up becoming a deadly adversary of the criminals and Batman. Brubaker really played up Batman's detective angle, as the Dark Knight scrambled around Gotham City first trying to identify this new menace, then attempting to locate him before he can pull off his ultimate scheme—killing Two-Face!

GOTHAM CENTRAL (DC) Brubaker shares writing chores on this title with Greg Rucka (*Wolverine*), sometimes co-writing, sometimes alternating storyarcs. In Brubaker's last solo-written tale, the cops of Gotham's Major Crimes Unit found themselves mired in a missing persons-turned-homicide case that had ties to the psycho-arsonist called Firebug. Brubaker's strength in this story lies in his attention to police procedure—like the best episodes of "Homicide" or "NYPD Blue," the cops race against the clock to chase down leads before Firebug can strike again, making for a nail-biting read with a twist at the end that'll leave your head spinning. Look for Brubaker to team up with Rucka for issues #12-#14, followed by his next solo arc.

SLEEPER (WildStorm/DC) Quite possibly the most underrated title on the racks today, *Sleeper* sucks the reader into the dirty world of undercover black ops, offering up chilling tales so slimy, fans'll need a shower after reading each ish. Holden Carver's an operative of the government's Internal Operations who's successfully infiltrated a criminal organization run by the evil genius Tao. But none of the good guys know about Carver's double agent status, and he's performed some bloody missions to get in good with his would-be boss, selling out his soul in the process. The moral ambiguity alone makes *Sleeper* a must-read, but combined with a colorful cast of characters and pulse-pounding action and suspense, *Sleeper* delivers non-stop entertainment from cover to cover! ■ **AS**

THE SILENCERS

Meet 'The Sopranos' on steroids, where the moral is never take sides against the Family—even if you have superpowers

THE DIRT When you're a team of superpowered mob enforcers, "Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer" takes on a whole new meaning—especially when your friends can't be trusted and your enemies consist of rival mobsters and cape-wearing heroes. Watch the *stugatz* hit the fan in Moonstone Books' ongoing series *The Silencers* by writer Fred Van Lente and penciler Steve Ellis.

DOYA LIKE? Mob flicks like "The Godfather" or "Goodfellas"? How 'bout books like *Powers* or *The Authority*? Then *fughedaboutit*, *The Silencers* is right up your alley.

DIDJA KNOW? Despite the fact that he's managed to nail the world of organized crime, series co-creator Van Lente doesn't spend his free time making concrete shoes. Rather, he pays the bills working at the United Nations in New York City. "I'm a document manager for the U.N. Pension Fund, which essentially means I'm a corporate librarian," says Van Lente. "It's the sort of work that makes it easy for one's mind to drift into the dark, dangerous world of super-noir that the Silencers live in."

In the world of *The Silencers*, the name "Cardinal" can strike fear into the hearts of wiseguys from Brooklyn to the Bronx.

Playing the role of the quintessential mob enforcer, the Cardinal (the 6'3", 73-year-old Silencers leader) was born in Italy, raised in an Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn, and soon found a place where he could put his mysterious superpowers (his skin carries a 100,000-volt charge) to use as a member of the Provenzano organized crime family. Yet despite holding a reputation among New York organized criminals as a deadly weapon and a force to be reckoned with, all the Cardinal wants to do is open a flower shop in his old neighborhood.

But just like Michael Corleone, when Cardinal thinks he's out, he gets pulled back in.

Mixing the worlds of crime fiction and spandex, *The Silencers* tells the story of a group of superpowered mob enforcers who are hired by the notorious Provenzano Family not only for protection from the cops and other families, but also from the "Tights"—Silencers slang for superheroes (look for a few brief glimpses of slightly familiar men in tights in issue #1). The Silencers themselves are a ruthless crew of hitmen among the five boroughs of New York City, and according to Van Lente, he need only look out his window for inspiration.

"My office [at the U.N. in Manhattan] overlooks the East River, specifically the coolest, creepiest building in New York City—the abandoned smallpox asylum on Roosevelt Island," says the scribe. "It's also near the remains of the Blackwell Penitentiary, and I've been hoping for some kind of 'Shining' effect from the killers and gangsters who were once locked up there."

WRITER: FRED VAN LENTE
ARTIST: STEVE ELLIS
PUBLISHER: MOONSTONE BOOKS

Yet while Van Lente may not be possessed by any deceased ex-inmates, *The Silencers* will possess readers from the opening sequence on the very first page of issue #1, as the team breaks up a drug ring with lots of scantily clad women at work. While the team boasts members such as Hairtrigger (a cross between the Punisher and Flash), Pyre (a zoot suit-wearing witchdoctor) and Big Numbers (a mob accountant who literally hulks out), the real story revolves around Cardinal.

While he dreams of retiring and opening up a flower shop, Cardinal learns the hard way in issue #1 that the only retirement plan from the mob consists of a nice plot of dirt at Greenwood Cemetery. But it seems someone not only wants to take out the Silencers' leader, but the entire team as well. When members start showing up dead (Pyre and Kid Chaos, who controls gravity, buy it in the first issue), it's obvious that the mystery assailants mean business.

As the mystery unfolds in issue #2 (on sale now), don't expect to see any tired, overused mob references. Van Lente doesn't steal from any mob flicks you've seen, choosing instead to offer his own classic lines. For example, when Cardinal meets up with Kid Chaos at the "Olive Hut" for a top-

GOODFELONS Don't call Stiletto a gangster moll; she just might take you out with her "psychokinetic" energy blade!

A TIGHTS SPOT The Silencers usually wrap up a job by avoiding vaguely familiar do-gooders.

secret meeting, Chaos asks why they met at a dumpy Italian chain restaurant. Cardinal replies, "Because it's the one place in Manhattan that no Provenzano would be caught dead in."

Backing up Van Lente's crack underworld dialogue are Steve Ellis' pencils, which straddle the line between *Powers* artist Mike Avon Oeming and *100 Bullets*' Eduardo Risso: gritty and stylized. Plus, the dynamic colors provided by Ellis and Dae Lim Yoo are a breath of fresh air in the black & white world of small press comics.

If you know every word to "Goodfellas" by heart, or even if you've never seen a "Godfather" flick before in your life, *The Silencers* delivers from start to finish. With a perfect blend of superheroes and organized crime, you'll definitely dig this series...*capiche*?

THE LAST WORD *The Silencers* makes you an offer you can't refuse: an intelligent mob story mixed with take-no-guff super-enforcers that'll leave you tearing through each issue like Joe Pesci tearing through a mook! Pick up a copy today...don't make me call up Vinny the Legs to "convince" you! ■ **CASEY SEIJAS**

WANNA PICK UP THIS SERIES?

Call 1-888-COMIC-BOOK to find your nearest comic shop, or visit www.moonstonebooks.com to order directly. Do you know about a cool series that deserves the "Secret Stash" treatment? Write to us at "Secret Stash," c/o Wizard Entertainment, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920, or e-mail us at secretstash@wizarduniverse.com.

THE BUZZ BIN

Does *The Silencers* sound like a winner? Then why not check out these books as well? All items ship in August unless otherwise noted.

BETTER DAYS Known as an Eisner Award-winning penciler for series like *Queen & Country* and *Pounded* from Oni Press, Steve Rolston now takes a crack at writing with his all-new graphic novel *One Bad Day*, also from Oni.

Typical teen Marie's having one of those days where she shoulda stayed in bed. But she's not getting hassled by her boss or getting a speeding ticket. Marie's bad day consists of her friends being murdered one by one. Now she's on the run for not only her life, but the lives of her closest friends as well.

Find out if Marie can survive the mother of all bad days this month! $9.95, www.onipress.com.

DANIEL WAY LEADS THE WAY Looking for someone to publish your book? Current *Venom* and *Gun Theory* writer Daniel Way's got your hook-up! Way recently started a co-op (not a publisher) to help aspiring mini-comic and 'zine creators with printing costs. For more info, visit www.badpressprinting.com.

KURTZ FORCE *PvP* writer/artist and die-hard "Star Wars" fan Scott Kurtz will provide a story for Dark Horse's *Star Wars Tales* #19 this fall. Fans of *PvP* may remember Kurtz's Star Wars strips in early issues of the comic, and Kurtz plans on mixing the world of Star Wars with..."The Breakfast Club"? $5.99, www.darkhorse.com.

BETTER TO GIVE In a world like our own, there is a being who roams the Earth giving incredible power to everyday objects. And when a barkeep finds a simple pearl, his life is forever changed. Find out what happens in Overcast Comics' *The Gift*, by Raven Gregory and Tyler Kirkham. $2.95, www.thegiftcomic.com.

GET MADE IN STYLE To coincide with their breakout hit, Moonstone Books will release a limited edition T-shirt based on *The Silencers*. Sporting a Steve Ellis design of Cardinal, wiseguys will step outta your way when they see you in this shirt...or just break your balls a little. $16.95, www.moonstonebooks.com. ■ CS

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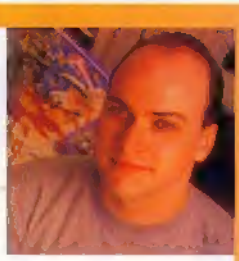
11 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT ALEX ROSS



1. THE LARGEST PRICE TAG for an Alex Ross original painting: $65,000 for *Batman: Knight Over Gotham* from his oversized *Batman: War on Crime* project with Paul Dini. Ross donated this large sum, plus the rest of the art sale proceeds (final tally: $157,400) to a school for underprivileged children in New York.

2. AT AGE 19, Alex Ross' first painting stint for comic books (both cover and interiors) was NOW Comics' five-issue series, *Terminator: The Burning Earth*, published in 1989-90. Ross had a crush on "Terminator" actress Linda Hamilton, which was one of the reasons he did the series.

3. CAPTAIN MARVEL, MILLIONAIRE? Ross feels that "Joe Millionaire" star Evan Marriott could play DC Comics' Captain Marvel, if a movie was ever made. "He's the modern day, perfect casting for Captain Marvel," says Ross, "with the exception of his inability to act."

4. THREE TO FOUR DAYS. That's the time Ross estimates it takes to finish one page of painted comic book artwork. "It takes far less time for a cover because it's one basic image, where a page has multiple panels," explains Ross. "A cover is about one-and-a-half to two days. For *Marvels* and *Kingdom Come*, I was doing 12 pages a month for each 180-page series, so it took about a year and four months to do each project."

5. TOY FIGURES litter the walls of Ross' house, including a complete set of the 1980s Super Powers DC figures from Kenner. The prize of his collection, though, is the first Superman toy ever made, a 1939 Novelty & Toy Company wooden doll Ross bought for $350 in 1990. Ross says that toy would command $1,000-$1,200 if he were to sell it.

6. THE MOST CHARACTERS ROSS has ever painted on a comic cover? The *Crisis on Infinite Earths* hardcover wraparound—a whopping 562 heroes and villains! "I was working for a month straight, doing nothing else, eight to 10 hours a day," exclaims Ross. "I was never more focused on a project. It was truly a work of passion. I had to convince the DC editors to let me and [penciler] George [Pérez] draw it."

7. BEFORE PAINTING COMIC BOOKS, Ross worked at the prestigious Chicago-based advertising agency Leo Burnett. He drew storyboards for commercials including Miller Lite and an Oldsmobile ad starring "Star Trek" actor Leonard Nimoy.

8. THE HARDEST CHARACTER FOR ROSS TO PAINT IS SPIDER-MAN. Ross states that because of Spidey's black webs that cover his costume, "he can come off looking like a two-dimensional drawing," notes Ross. "He's got an ink outline on him; ink lines his body. Taking those ink lines and making them look like they're existing in three-dimensional space has always been a very delicate procedure."

9. ONE CANCELLED PROJECT that Ross regrets not doing would have spotlighted his favorite supervillains. The tabloid-sized *Portraits of Villainy* he and writer Paul Dini proposed to DC Comics back in 2000 didn't make the cut. "It was a case where the editorial department of DC was behind it, but the powers-that-be decided it wasn't going to make enough money to make it worthwhile," laments Ross.

10. ROSS STRIVES TO BE MORE LIKE SUPERMAN. "Superman can remind us of certain ethics and moral choices. A lot of my belief systems, right and wrong, were based on Superman. The only great moral choices that seem to come into my life deal with matters of business and ethics, two things entirely at odds with each other. My standing by people I can believe in and staying away from those unscrupulous others is usually the best I do to act upon what I've learned."

11. ROSS DESIGNED THE LOGO for Alan Moore's ABC Comics. "I'm proud of it and would love everyone to know I made a contribution to the ABC books," says Ross of the "starry A" icon. "There's not really a credit line for logos in comics, but from *Terminator* to my oversized books, I've designed them all." ■ DANNY CONSTANTINO

MODELS INC. Ross uses live models for Green Lantern, Wonder Woman and all his work.